



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

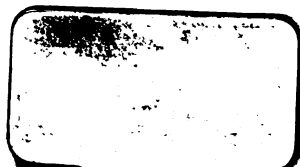
About Google Book Search

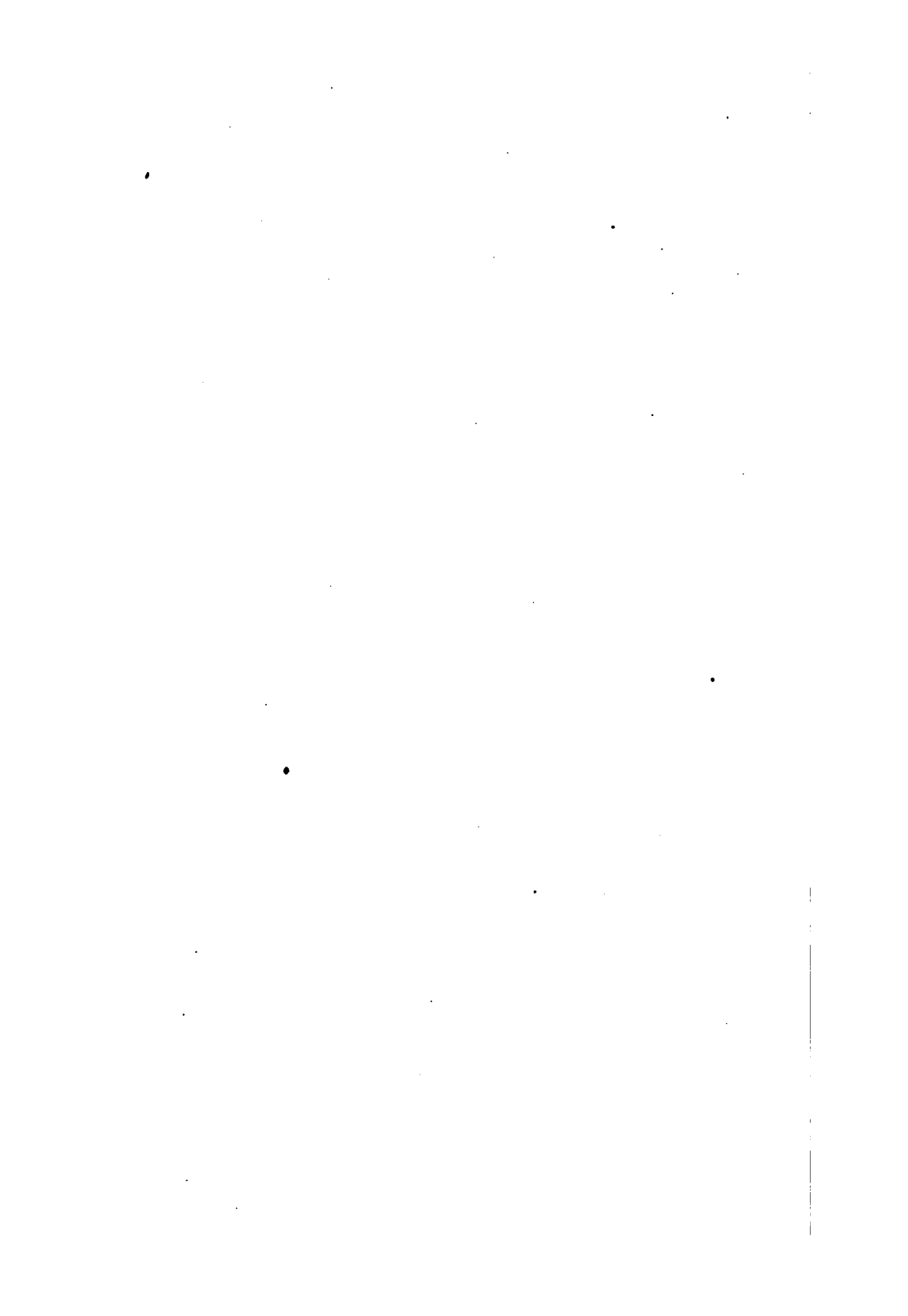
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600067551U





A WOMAN
AGAINST
THE WORLD.

A Novel.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1864.

The right of Translation is reserved.

250. S. 202.



LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

A

WOMAN AGAINST THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

HOWEVER anxious the Doctor was to leave St. Helen's next morning, fate willed otherwise. Agnes was unequal to the journey, and could not come down stairs; moreover, when he told her of his intention, she seemed most unwilling to return home.

"Of course, dear," she said, "I'll do as you wish; but I shall be terribly disappointed if I do not finish my visit. I've seen nothing yet; there's the cave to be visited by torchlight; seals to be killed; lobsters to be caught; rabbits to be hunted; and we are to go out fishing. Arthur—I mean, Mr. Apsly has ordered his sail-boat round, and I'm sure you will enjoy the fun as much as any one; now, there's a dear Daddy, do stay."

She lifted up her pale face. What could the Doctor do but smile, and kiss his pretty daughter?

"At any rate you shan't go to-day! But as soon as it is safe to move you," he murmured to himself, as he descended the stairs, "we'll bid good-bye to these quarters." He put on his hat, and went out for a stroll.

"Arthur!" he said; "hang it, how pat she is with his name! I'm afraid, I'm afraid, hers is a malady beyond my skill. I hope I'm wrong. I hope she doesn't love that pretty woman's face. I've no faith in it. Yet he is a handsome fellow; and if she loves him, hang it, she musn't be disappointed. She couldn't bear it; either her life or reason would be sacrificed. But how to help it. Ah! there's the rub. Like all parsons, *purse*nal charms have the greatest attraction for him. Before Mary and her mother came back he was always flitting about Agnes. By —, I see it now; 'tis as plain as a pikestaff; he wants to be master at the Hall, by-and-bye. I could spoil his game!"

"Yes, Doctor, you could; but at what cost?"

A white-robed figure rose before him, and stood in his path—the figure of a tall majestic woman in her winding-sheet. Many wrinkles gathered on her face; her grey hairs were nearly hidden by the linen cap. Much sorrow was written on her countenance; she looked reproachfully at him, and he thought he heard her murmur—"Richard!"

The Doctor closed his eyes; opening them again, the form had vanished. After all 'twas but a trick

of the fancy; but the image, though only seen on the mirror of his mind, called him back to truth and honour.

"No," he said, "it cannot be! Anything but that. Oh, Agnes, my child! my love for you almost makes me forget my duty."

So distracted was he by the nature of his reflections, that he spent the whole morning in roaming about the island. The Rector and Arthur were shooting rabbits; but he wouldn't join them. In answer to the invitation of the former, he said he was going to the beach for some actinæ which he wanted to dissect.

Presently the sportsmen were joined by their hostess and Mary.

A rabbit got up before Arthur; he missed right and left, when his father rolled it over. The Rector was immensely pleased at being able to give the ladies this proof of his prowess, and commenced a narrative of a shooting-party, where he distinguished himself by killing twelve woodcocks out of thirteen in thick cover. "The head-keeper said he'd never seen such deadly work, and my friend Bigmore (Bigmore's a bit of a wag, you know) remarked that a parson who shot like me ought to be made a canon."

It required three consecutive misses of fair shots in the open to lower the Rector's estimation of his skill as a marksman to its proper level.

"I suppose your sight is not so good as it once

was," said Mrs. Maddocks, smiling mischievously at Mary.

The Rector hated the idea of being thought an elderly man, and declared he knew no difference.

"I can see the eye in that gull now," he said, pointing to a chough that flew fifty yards over head, "as clearly as possible."

"That crow, you mean," said Mary.

Arthur couldn't help joining in the laugh at his young father's expense.

"Ahem!" said the Rector, "the sun was in my eyes; or rather," he said, "the brightness of a lady's eyes" (bowing to Mrs. Maddocks) "have dazzled mine."

"I believe the governor," said Arthur to himself, "is a candidate for matrimonial honours."

"Wouldn't the breast of some of these sea birds," said Mrs. Maddocks, "look well on a lady's hat?"

"Admirably well," said the Rector.

Below where they stood a small grebe was swimming close in-shore. The coast at this spot sloped down to the water's edge.

Mr. Apsly saw the bird. "There is the very creature; its glossy white plumage would look bewitching in a black hat; just the breast and neck, no more, nicely prepared. I understand the whole art of taxidermy. I will bring it to you in a moment."

"Take care," said Arthur, as his parent set out down the incline; "the grass is very slippery."

Scorning all precautions, resolved to exhibit his activity, the reverend gentleman, with a pleasant smile directed at the widow, tripped along the treacherous herbage; but ere he proceeded a short distance, his heels slipped from under him, and he shot like a heap of rubbish down to the bottom, enduring many painful shocks, and several unpleasant encounters with sharp stones by the way.

Picking himself up at the end of his journey, he rejoiced to find his action unimpaired by broken bones; and now that the ladies were at some distance, he carefully adjusted his spectacles, and proceeded to stalk his victim.

Creeping behind a rock, he lifted his head cautiously, and saw the bird some twenty yards before him. Despite his skill, he rested his gun on the stone and fired. With its usual expertness the grebe dived at the flash; and rising soon again, nodded his head at the parson, who gave him the second barrel with as much effect as the first.

Somewhat crest-fallen, he commenced to retrace his steps; but now that the excitement of the chase had passed away, he felt an unaccustomed degree of coolness about his legs, whereby he discovered that a new ventilating arrangement marred the integrity of his raiment. He could only sit down and wave to Arthur.

"I'm afraid your father has damaged himself," said Mrs. Maddocks.

Arthur sped to his assistance, exclaiming, "What's the matter? are you hurt?"

"No! no! Only get the women out of the way: or stay, run home and bring me a pair of pantaloons."

When all the party met in the drawing-room that evening no one seemed to be in good spirits save the lady of the house. During dinner no reference had been made to the Rector's adventure; but when Mrs. Maddocks handed him a cup of tea, she couldn't forbear asking the Rector if he felt any ill effects from his accident.

At first the Rector was a little piqued; but wisely remembering the joke would soon be worn out if he joined in the laughter, he replied:

"Not at all; not at all, thank you! But I hope Murchison won't visit St. Helen's shortly in search of slicken-sides, else he will certainly be led into an error, if he sees the traces of grooving left by my descent."

The Doctor, who now first heard of the story, was mightily amused, and the merriment thus awakened improved the spirits of every one.

"What shall we do?" said Mary.

"Play loo," cried her uncle, "or vingt-un."

"Or whist," said the Rector.

"We're too many," said Mrs. Maddocks.

"Then you shall decide," said the Rector, bowing and smiling to his hostess.

"What do you say to the Noun and Question game?"

"What's that?" said the Doctor.

"The poetry game, dear, we played at Filey last Christmas."

"Oh, — poetry. I never wrote a line in my life."

"Then you shall begin to - night," said his daughter.

"No; not to please the Queen; God bless her."

"Yes; but you will to please me!"

The Doctor looked at the pale face of his child: there was no resisting her appealing look.

"Oh, you witch; must your old father make a fool of himself at your bidding?"

Mary delivered to each person two pieces of paper, and issued the necessary instructions to her uncle, warning him that he must not put a scientific question, or any stupid scientific word for his noun.

The distribution was soon made, and then a dead silence ensued, broken only by the scratching of pencils on paper. There were the usual protestations of inability to perform the task. One or other had to ask, What rhymed to realm? and the Doctor wanted to know if any one could give him a rhyme for "fire-irons," since he could only think of citrate of iron or steel filings.

At length in about half-an-hour Mr. Apsly was voted into the chair; but wishing to avoid any fur-

ther proofs of his good sight, he deputed Arthur to read the verses.

Question.—"Where do the sea-fairies dwell?"

Noun.—"Fire-irons."

"Ah, that's mine," said the Doctor; "some idiot must ——"

"Hush, dear," said Agnes; "you must not tell. None of us are supposed to know who is the author of any verse."

"Oh, indeed. Very well then, Apsly; I will withdraw my remark."

Arthur resumed.

The Doctor again interposed:

"Mind you, there is no rhyme for fire-irons!"

"Hush, dear! Hush!" cried Agnes.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. Go on, Apsly."

"I'm surprised that any sensible person should believe,
That such animals in the 19th century live.
And as for dwellings and fire-irons—of such stuff,
Not doctor's—I have had more than quantum suff—."

Much applause greeted the poet.

Question.—"Who shot a grebe to-day?"

• *Noun.*—"Magic ——"

"Over the sward the sportsman flies;
Like magic down to the rocks he hies,
And calmly cocks his gun.
Slowly the victim swims along,
Heedless that any deadly wrong
Might to itself be done.

The sportsman ne'er was known to miss:
 Chough, gull, or rabbit, all were his
 Whene'er he raised his deadly piece.
 And now the bird the wave must kiss
 With bloody beak in death's cold rigour,
 As soon as he should pull the trigger.
 Now, don't with my poor story quarrel!
 As he looked along the barrel,
 A bright light flashed upon the sight
 That almost blinded him outright.
 The little bird escaped—but whence
 Came this extraordinary radiance?
 The sunbeam caught a lady's eyes—
 And then reflected fell upon
 The sight of the poor sportsman's gun,
 Who thus was cheated of his prize.
 And losing this he loses more;
 But now he daren't his woes outpour."

Arthur knew such antiquated doggerel could only
 have come from his father: and the blush that
 spread over his cheeks when he finished the lines,
 and caught the Rector exchanging or trying to ex-
 change glances with Mrs. Maddocks, was not the
 glow of honest pride.

The three next papers have been lost; a copy of
 the fourth has been preserved.

Question.—"What is happiness?"

Noun.—"Madness!"

"I cannot tell. But once I had a dream
 When lying on a bed of violets
 That spread themselves beside a purling stream,
 The flowers gave forth unstintedly their sweets;
 The wild bees hummed round every bud and bloom,
 And all the air was laden with perfume.

The wind scarce stirred among the willow buds,
The dragon-fly in glory flashed along,
And every bough of the green-tinted woods
Rained forth a shower of all unrivalled song.
This then is surely happiness, I thought,
Yet no meet answer to my heart was brought.

I sighed—that thus my soul should ask in vain
When joy, exuberant joy, filled earth and air ;
And I alone seemed sensible of pain,
Or conscious that existence could bring care.
Feeling that music and the breath of flowers
Had failed to render glad one spring day's hours.

Forego the search, 'tis madness to aspire
To win such knowledge, said a voice beside me,
When all men take the lower for the higher,
And if thou choose the better, will deride thee.
Where none are true, save those who early die
Ere their fine gold has touched impurity."

The Rector and the Doctor were the only persons in the room who did not at once attribute the lines to Agnes ; but when the general commendation and the young lady's blushes acquainted them with the fact, the latter gentleman looked very serious.

"It's a bad sign," thought he, "when young girls talk morbidly of early death—hopelessness of being happy—and all such bosh. Poor thing ! I wonder would absence effect a cure ? Come what may, I won't let her stop here, eating her own heart with vexation. Neither will I suffer that young minx Mary to carry off her sweetheart so easily. No, not if I do as I said I would. Anyhow, I'll leave this place to-morrow,"

Now Agnes neither did nor said anything which the most prudish person could object to, and yet it was clear even to her father that she was terribly in love with Arthur. There are some natures so transparently innocent that they can no more hide any deep emotion than deny the truth. Agnes was pale and languid, and sadly depressed: she tried to look bright; she fought against her morbid melancholy; but the struggle almost increased the malady; at any rate it did not mitigate it.

As for Arthur, he did not care to pluck the fruit which he might easily gather. Moreover, Mary had wounded his vanity, and he really believed himself to be desperately in love with her. Therefore he resolved, though rejected, not to consider himself defeated; and for the rest of the evening he devoted himself to his lady-love.

No woman is insensible to admiration and proof against the attentions of a handsome clever man, and before they separated for the night, she confessed to herself, "I can understand and quite forgive Agnes for loving Arthur Apsly," and then she added a mental postscript—"If he doesn't care sufficiently for her to marry her, why should he be forced to do so?"

For more than an hour the Doctor sat with his daughter's soft hand lying in his; every now and then patting it affectionately, and sometimes whispering, "The air of this place is too relaxing for you; we'll leave it to-morrow."

"Arthur," said his father, when they were left alone; "I've something to communicate to you."

"I am all attention, sir."

"You have been, my dear boy, a very dutiful son. You have never given me cause for anxiety. You have done your best to fill up that awful void caused by my terrible bereavement; but I am compelled to say that the loss of your beatified mother not even your affection has sufficed to supply."

"Well, sir, if you will point out how I may amend my ways, or in what manner I can serve you better, I am sure I will do my best to make you happy."

"Thank you, Arthur (though I did not need the assurance), but I may as well tell you that you can do nothing more—the fact is I intend to marry."

"To marry, sir!"

"Yes, my boy!"

"May I ask who is the fortunate lady?"

"Our hostess!"

"And she has given her consent?"

"I cannot expressly say that she has consented, because I have not yet asked her; but of course you know, having made up MY mind, there can be no doubt about the issue."

"You have my consent," said Arthur, as he walked off, humming an air.

"What a good-natured fellow he is!" said the Rector, taking his bed-room candle.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE Mrs. Maddocks was dressed next morning, her maid brought Lord Ravenscroft's and Mr. Jones's cards. Looking out through the window, she saw a large schooner yacht at anchor in the Race.

"Where are the gentlemen?"

"In the breakfast-room."

Mrs. Maddocks's feelings resembled those of a poor man who receives an unexpected legacy to which some disagreeable condition is attached. Lord Ravenscroft was indeed a welcome guest; but Mr. Jones was something worse than a nuisance. She had hoped by her rudeness at Howden Park to have thrown a wet blanket on the ardour of his friendship; but his arrival uninvited indicated his intention to court her society *nolens volens*. The next question that presented itself to her mind was, Could she afford to quarrel with him? This was too momentous an issue to be decided in a moment, so she descended to the breakfast-room in her prettiest morning robe, and bade both gentlemen welcome to breakfast.

"On my word, Mrs. Maddocks," said his Lordship, "I fear you must consider us intruders. I told my friend that in thus appearing unbidden we might subject ourselves to banishment from your dominions."

"Not at all, my Lord; on the contrary, this island is sacred to friendship: therefore to be welcome you have only to propitiate the presiding deity."

"I told you so, Ravenscroft," said Mr. Jones. "But I must tell you our history, Mrs. Maddocks. I persuaded his Lordship to accompany me to the quarries, and last night we got becalmed just off the land. I proposed coming on shore then, but was overruled; however, this morning I had my way."

"I am sorry to find, Mr. Jones, that you have made a victim of your friend."

"I pray you won't be ungenerous, Mrs. Maddocks; it needs no compulsion to visit St. Helen's."

Mary now came into the room, and the rest of the party soon followed.

It was with a very ungrateful heart that the Rector thanked the Creator for his mercies when he went through what is termed family *worship* after breakfast. While he acknowledged that more was given than either he or any other deserved, he could not help wishing that the society of the two arrivals had not been bestowed; at least until he had made Mrs. Maddocks acquainted with his kindly intentions towards herself. "It would have been so much plea-

santer," he said, "to have given her a right to show her preference for me before all these people."

Somewhat similar reflections occupied Arthur's mind. "Men," he said, "when past thirty years of age, never put themselves out of the way to call on ladies, without some ulterior motive." However, he could not reproach himself with slowness as his father did.

The Doctor insisted on leaving. Neither Agnes's inclination to remain, nor her aunt's and cousin's entreaties could induce him to alter his intention.

Arthur escorted them to the boat; he could not do less. Agnes longed to ask when she should see him again. Summoning all her courage, she bade him good-bye, with apparent cheerfulness; but her father could not fail to observe that his daughter's heart was heavy, and grew heavier as the opposite shore drew near.

"Never mind, my darling," was his secret thought. "You shan't play second fiddle all your days."

With that selfishness from which few of us are exempt, the Rector and his son sincerely regretted the desertion of the Doctor and Agnes, since propriety would now compel their departure; but as St. Olaff's was near at hand, as long as the waters were smooth, they could at least make frequent morning calls.

It was no small satisfaction to Mrs. Maddocks to entertain a peer of the realm, especially as he was a

young and an intelligent man; but it was rather a bore to have the two Apelys and Jones to be civil to at the same moment. As for the latter, he was a nuisance, and instinct told her his presence boded mischief, though she could not divine how it would be manifested.

She had understood that Lord Ravenscroft was exclusive; that though women flirted round him, he never flirted with them; therefore she might infer that either herself or her daughter had attracted him on shore, since it would have been very easy to have remained on board the yacht, if he had not wished to renew their acquaintance.

When Arthur entered the room he could not help smiling at the ease with which the widow kept all the gentlemen in play, assisted in some measure only by her daughter, and although he was anything but a happy lover, it amused him to see the Rector's chagrin at the subordinate part he was obliged to perform in the presence of his Lordship. With the air of a privileged friend, he sat himself beside Mary, and soon engrossed all her attention.

Lord Ravenscroft observed this, and with true politeness devoted himself wholly to the mother, thinking "I am not sure that she is not the more beautiful of the two."

Jones noticed his attention, and a cloud fell over his face.

"Will you think me very bold, Mrs. Maddocks, if

"

I propose a walk? I am a stranger to St. Helen's, and should very much like to look round your domain."

Of course the lady was delighted, and in a very short time the whole party were in the open air.

"You must be our pilot, Mr. Apsly."

"Then you had better take my arm," said the reverend gentleman.

"Oh dear no, thank you!"

"Well meant!" said Arthur, who heard the speech; "but you have not got her answer yet, and now you will have the pleasure of playing gooseberry."

The same malicious fate that attended his father was also reserved for himself. Mr. Jones being uncomfortably disposed, resolved to balance his misery by walking on the other side of Mary. Thus the party were arranged in two trios. Darwin's theory of natural selection had not then been started; neither did any two of the good people instinctively follow it, or at any rate succeed in putting it into practice. It was a very pleasant party!

As they passed the scene of the Rector's misadventure, he cast an imploring look at Mrs. Maddocks; but save a merry glance in reply, the lady did not refer to the circumstance.

"She is truly an amiable creature," said the Rector, "and will make an admirable wife. A fine temper is a priceless possession, especially in a woman." Unthinkingly he delivered this sentiment aloud.

"Good gracious! Mr. Apsly, when did you make this discovery, and what led you to publish it now?"

"The chameleon assumes the colour of the fruit it feeds on; it is impossible for me to have enjoyed so much of your society as I have, without my mind being impressed with those qualities which distinguish you, and which now unconsciously find utterance in words."

The lady bowed, gravely—it was not her *rôle* to play the part of the gratified beauty at that moment.

Lord Ravenscroft could not help perceiving that the Rector's compliments were *de trop*.

Each of the trio mentally observ'd, that the walk would be much pleasanter if one were absent.

The explorers proceeded southward on the east coast; returning on the west side of the island they came to the high cliffs occupied by the birds, and the scene of the Doctor's and Agnes's perilous adventure was pointed out to his Lordship, who of course was properly horrified, and delivered himself of very nice sentiments.

"Danger," he said, "is very often comparative only. An inhabitant of St. Kilda would think nothing of robbing those gulls' nests," pointing to some hundreds of them built of long grass on tiny ledges of the cliff. "Not very far from Filey there is an isolated rock standing out like a church-spire in the water, only as lofty as three or four steeples: yet the farm-boys, sans shoes, their feet covered only with

thick woollen stockings, which prevent them from slipping, ascend it, and, what is far more difficult, descend it with their frocks filled with eggs. Indeed, as a boy I've performed the feat myself. If you will permit me" (turning to Mrs. Maddocks), "I will get you these eggs below us."

"Not for the world, Lord Ravenscroft! Not for the world!"

"There's no danger, my dear Madam," said the Rector.

Mrs. Maddocks perceived the mischievous idea, and smiling her best, said—"If you choose to claim the freedom of an old friend, you may try, Mr. Apsly."

The Rector bowed, and was silent.

Lord Ravenscroft was nettled at the Parson's speech. To be deterred from performing a harmless feat, lest a lady should be momentarily nervous, was hardly a sufficient reason to prevent him from exhibiting the expertness he had claimed for himself; so he walked to the brink, when Mrs. Maddocks seized him by the arm, and implored him to desist. Under the circumstances, he could but comply, and was rewarded for his complacency by the most eloquent look, and sweetest smile he had ever received. "Truly," thought he, "it is a very pleasant thing to feel that a lovely woman is interested in your well-being." His lordship smiled in return.

Those courtesies were observed and highly disap-

proved of by the Rector, who again chided himself that he had allowed so much time to elapse without declaring his intentions.

Mr. Jones had by this time come up, and he, too, noticed the mutually pleasant relations that seemed to exist between Mrs. Maddocks and his noble friend, and reproached himself that he had brought them together.

"Confound it!" he thought—"it was Mary that attracted him at my house; but no wonder—the mother is a perfect witch. However, I'll get him out of this to-night."

In spite of the uncanny nature of his reflections, Mr. Jones smiled as pleasantly as if he were being installed a Knight of the Garter. It was only Mrs. Maddocks who distrusted the extreme placidity of his countenance, and saw beneath the clever mask he wore.

"I'll get rid of him before long," thought she; "and I *won't* have him, like Fate, stalking in between me and everything worth possessing on earth."

They now resumed their ramble, and the Rector, not having quite recovered from the effect of his snubbing, joined Jones, and they walked on together as comfortably as a brace of pointers coupled, trying to pass a post which lies between them.

Before this time Mrs. Maddocks had begun to build castles, or rather to construct a bower, in which she and Lord Ravenscroft might work out the drama

of their lives as man and wife. It would be a triumph to bowl over the only peer (unmarried) in Arcady, although he was not a rich man. Their united incomes would make a handsome rent-roll, if he would be content with provincial distinction, and shun the fascinations of the great world. Six thousand a-year would not suffice for a town life; nevertheless, they might taste a little of the Circean joys of Belgravia; might see the inside of St. James's, during the crush of a drawing-room, and dance at some of those wonderful balls recorded in newspapers. These possibilities enlivened her fancy, gave piquancy to her conversation and additional lustre to her eyes. Only a blind man might question her beauty—only a fool could deem her common-place.

Although her woman's nature emitted these sparks of vanity, the morning's ramble had stirred far deeper feelings—feelings which she fancied had burnt themselves out; but which, in reality, had only retreated into the hidden recesses of her nature, as flowers die down in winter, to reappear when the summer sun warms the cold earth.

That which is purest, and tenderest, and holiest in woman had been cruelly crushed in her, ere yet the full meaning of life had dawned upon her comprehension.

Once she had made a sacrifice such as few are called upon to offer for another's sake; and through evil report and good report she had kept her oath,

though she had gained nothing, but had only suffered evil, until she had almost lost hope that the day could come when her lips would be unsealed; and the conviction grew upon her that her sorrow could only be laid down with her life: for fate had so willed, that the lash should even yet remain in the hands of the offender.

But now the hidden springs were bursting into life, with all the freshness and vigour of regeneration. The long winter was passing away; was there not a summer before her? The very idea invested life with an interest she had never experienced before, and such a life, moreover, as that now dawning, if the instincts of her heart did not deceive her.

As she walked on beside her new acquaintance, two parallel currents of thought seemed simultaneously to occupy her mind. The first was how to render the present a sure foretaste of the future; and the other a train of self-congratulatory reminiscences, when she remembered how she had laboured through the past twelve years to render herself worthy of the position she occupied, and how completely she had succeeded.

It must not be supposed that in this short time Lord Ravenscroft had dropped a single word that might justify his companion's hopes. On the contrary, he was especially guarded—very gentlemanly, humorous, and agreeable—nothing more.

Evidently he enjoyed his ramble. Mrs. Maddocks

could speak French fluently—so could he. She knew all about Avignon and the old popes—so did he. She had read and could quote Petrarch—he could do neither; here she showed a little superiority; but, with ready tact, she pursued the subject no farther when she perceived it would be at the cost of her playing schoolmistress.

By this time the house was again in sight, and luncheon was on table.

How pretty mother and daughter looked, when they entered the dining-room, and threw off their hats, not troubling themselves to put their hair in order in their dressing-rooms! Both knew that in any attire they must look well; and both understood that, in the freedom of the mid-day meal, they would be more attractive in their *dishabille* than in any other costume.

In throwing off her jacket, Mary managed to entangle it in the brooch that fastened her collar. Lord Ravenscroft observed her embarrassment and set her free.

"Thanks!" she murmured, turning suddenly round to hide a deep blush: not that she concealed it from his lordship, who imagined that his attentions were not quite acceptable, because she called to Arthur Apsly, and gave him her jacket to put down.

"They are a handsome couple," said his lordship, good-naturedly, yet with a sigh.

Among many topics of conversation started, the

subject of seals, and their appearance on the coast was broached.

"That reminds me," said Arthur, "at the north end of the island there is a large cavern, in which seals are frequently found. The late tenant used to supply himself with oil at their expense."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Maddocks, "how did he kill them?"

"He used to go down at night, at low water, with torches, accompanied by his farm-servants armed with sticks, and knock them on the head."

"Can't we organize an expedition?"

"My father and myself leave to-night, else I should be delighted."

"Jones can give you a bed on board the 'Thalassa,'" said Lord Ravenscroft. "Can't you Jones?"

"Oh, certainly!" said that gentleman, with a grim smile of doubtful pleasure; since this proposition interfered with his arrangement to get his friend away.

The Rector, who was far too good a sportsman to let the foxes remain in charge of the chickens, if he could avoid it, immediately acquiesced in the proposal.

"How about a boat?" said Mrs. Maddocks.

"Our friend Jones will provide one, I'm sure."

"Delighted!" said that gentleman, in the most lugubrious key, inwardly cursing his lordship's coolness in thus disposing of his yacht and her crew.

"We dine at six, gentlemen," said Mrs. Maddocks. "Meantime we will leave you to your own devices. Come, Mary!"

CHAPTER III.

ARTHUR and Jones went out rabbit-shooting. Mr. Apsly and his Lordship obtained a boat from the 'Thalassa,' and were rowed across the Race to inspect the remnants of a Druid's circle. Thus employed, all the gentlemen found the hours pass pleasantly, until they once more assembled in the cottage.

At eight o'clock the ladies retired to put on suitable dresses—an example followed by their guests.

At nine they were all in the 'Thalassa's' gig, manned by four seamen.

"What time is it low water, Mason?" said Jones to the stroke-oar.

"Ten o'clock, sir—from that to half-past."

"Do you know this cave?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long can we stop in it?"

"Half-an-hour before and after low water to-night, sir; the tide don't ebb quite far enough."

"No longer?"

"Not, 'less you want a ducking, sir."

"D'ye hear that, ladies?"

"The ladies are not timid," said Mary.

"Keep her in the eddy, sir," said Mason. "Close in-shore the tide runs strong to the last minute."

Jones, who was coxswain, obeyed, and steered the gig in near the rocks, just leaving room for the oars.

So deep was the shadow thrown from the cliff, that it was almost dark round the boat; but outside, at a short distance, the water was lit up by the glow from the departed sun, and also from the brightness that lingered round the north.

"What is that strange appearance in the sky?" said Mary, pointing to the east.

A luminous arch of a deep red colour spanned the whole heavens. In appearance it was some ten feet wide, except at the zenith, where it spread out into a flattened dome.

"It's the Aurora Borealis."

"We shall have wild weather after this," said Mason.

While the form and outline of the phenomenon remained unchanged, its colour varied incessantly from pale pink to purple, streaked longitudinally with flashes of orange light.

"It seems," said Arthur, "like a triumphal arch in honour of some angelic being—such a one as might have been raised when Michael returned from the overthrow of Satan and his angels."

"I imagine," said Mary, "if such modes of honour-

ing the mighty obtain in the spirit-world, a sun would be selected as the foundation of each end of the arch."

"And all the star-dust would be swept out of the way of the conquerors," said Jones.

If the remark was meant for a joke, it fell flat. If for a sneer at things sacred, no one heeded it.

Still the glorious aerial bridge spanned the vault of heaven, rising, as it seemed, almost to the stars. Along the edges brilliant coruscations of light played, like fringes of sparkling gems. It stretched across from east to west, apparently touching the earth on one side, and the sea on the other. Pale pillars of light shot up from the north, changing and interchanging with bands and separate cloud-like forms of variously-coloured ether. Then, as they gazed, the arch melted away, and diffused itself all over the northern sky, which glowed like the purple sea in a rich summer sunset.

All, save Jones and the boat's crew, were gazing at the unusual sight, when the loud voice of the former shouted—"Bow oar there!" The sailor tossed in his oar, and grasped the boat-hook.

"Leave the boat-hook alone, and get the lights ready!"

Half a tar-barrel, nearly filled with tow, tallow, and naphtha, was hoisted on a temporary platform, laid across the bows of the boat. To each gentleman a torch was handed, as well as a stout stick.

"Are you all ready?" said Jones.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Set fire to the barrel, then; and let every gentleman light his torch, taking care to hold it over the water, that the tar may not drop on the ladies. They may tar themselves, if they like."

There was not a ripple on the sea, and perfect stillness prevailed, except the lapping sound of the water, as it rose and fell with a gentle palpitation round the black rocks, hung with dark drapery of dripping weed.

"Where is the cavern?" said Mary, who perceived no archway in the black cliff, beneath which the boat rested.

"There," said Jones, "where the darkness is blackest."

"What! that hole?"

"Just so—that hole. But the door is unlocked now."

"Door! I see no door!"

"We are resting on it."

"Oh! I understand you; you mean that the sea covers it at high-water."

"Exactly."

"Then if we remained too long?"

"Instead of catching seals our fate would be sealed. Bear a hand there, men. Two oars are enough. Are you ready there in the bow?"

"Ay, ay! sir."

The fire no sooner touched the inflammable contents of the barrel than a blaze of ruddy light flashed up over the cliff, and sent a thousand sea-birds screaming off their ledges. Each man lit his torch. Jones gave the word, and in another moment they entered the mouth of the cave.

For some fifty yards it was neither wider nor higher than a railway tunnel; the sides were perfectly steep, draped with thick weed, of which a fringe floated and fell with the water as it swashed up and down the walls.

At this point it suddenly expanded into a huge hall of varying height, but nearly equal width; and while they wondered at the extent of this strange chamber the keel of the boat grated on the bottom.

"Shove off!" cried Jones; "the channel's on the port side. Overboard two of you."

A "yo heave ho!" that sounded and resounded through the vault, and then the boat was again afloat.

To the left was a large shelf of rock; as they neared it they were greeted with a sound resembling the barking of a dog. A pair of eyes danced in the fire-light, the ladies screamed, there was a splash in the water, and phoca diving under the boat escaped.

"There goes a fine old bull-seal," said Mason. "I wish the tide wasn't quite so high."

The channel was now too narrow for oars, as on

both sides ledges of rock projected, so the boat had to be poled in.

"Now," said Jones, "two of you ashore to the right and two to the left. There's a deep pool farther in; drive the beasts in that direction, we'll keep the ground in front."

Lord Ravenscroft and Arthur scrambled on the rocks, torch and stick in hand, on one side, two of the sailors on the other. Before them they heard some splashing in the water; at last Arthur observed a dark object wobbling to the edge before him; he rushed at it, and had the satisfaction of dealing it a blow on the tail, which expedited its movements, causing the creature to go down beside the boat with a splash that covered his father with water.

The boat now approached within twenty yards of the extreme end, and ran aground.

"All hands overboard," cried Jones, setting the example; but the water didn't reach to the knee.

"Three days hence," said he, "and the tide would leave this dry; but it's nearly low water now."

Mr. Apsly very reluctantly rose from his seat at the order to disembark.

"Are you going to wet your feet, Mr. Apsly?" said Mrs. Maddocks, seeing her friend hesitate.

"Certainly! unless, indeed, you feel timid; or rather I should say, if you would prefer my remaining where I am."

"Oh! I wouldn't for the world interfere with your sport!"

Without another word the Rector plumped overboard.

On the right a brisk skirmish was going on; the sailors stood between three seals and the water, and with little trouble knocked them over, one blow on the head being sufficient for the purpose.

Sundry splashes heard in front informed the party that the victims had retired to their citadel—the pool which occupied the far end of the cave.

At low tides this pool ran nearly dry, leaving a margin of beach between it and the side nearest the entrance; but this, as we have seen, was now nearly knee deep, and was the point which Jones had selected to guard.

The naphtha being expended in the barrel, and there being no wind to blow off the smoke, the light became very much obscured, while particles of soot were rained down on the ladies.

"Where are the blue-lights, Mason?" said his master.

"In the stern sheets, sir, in a box."

"Pardon me, ladies," said Jones, as he pulled out the box and took out a dozen of the lights. "Will you help us, Mrs. Maddocks?"

"What can I do?"

"Set fire to another of these as each one burns out," said Jones, applying the touch-paper to his torch.

In a few seconds the blue-light burst forth, illuminating every crack and cranny of the cavern with its ghastly glare.

"Tumble the tar-barrel overboard!"

The burning wood hissed in the water; and the last wreath of pitch smoke curled up to the roof.

"Now, boys! we shall see what we are about. Look alive; and take care that none of the rascals get out to sea between your legs."

The shore party beat round all the ledges of the rock, and save the three killed by the sailors, all the natives were in the water, round which the pursuers gathered; but neither the gleam of the torches, nor the blaze of the blue-lights, could penetrate the mysterious depths of the black pool, wherein nothing seemed to stir, except when now and then a crab crawled to the surface and retreated as soon as he saw the strange creatures that had invaded his territory.

"Hang it," said Jones; "they've done us, I'm afraid! How deep is the pool, Mason?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Sound it one of you, with a boat-hook!"

"Four feet," shouted the sailor, as he looked at the wet mark on the staff.

"Try again."

"Five feet!—three and a half!—nearly six feet!—four feet!"

"Into it, my hearties! 'twon't drown ye," said Jones.

The men looked at each other, and seemed indisposed to move. Just then the blue-light went out.

"I beg pardon," said Mrs. Maddocks, lighting another. "The accident shan't occur again."

"Now, my bullies! jump in," cried Jones.

The men wouldn't move.

"D'ye hear me, you rascals! Mason, show 'em the way."

"I'm feered they'll bite, yer honour."

"Hand me the boat-hook," said Lord Ravenscroft.

"Take care—take care, my lord!" cried both ladies. "For heaven's sake keep on the rock."

Giving his torch to the nearest sailor, he jumped into the water up to his shoulders, and stirring about with the boat-hook as he moved on, half-a-dozen black noses appeared above the surface.

Stimulated by his example, Arthur and Mason also plunged in and gave the *coup-de-grace* to an elderly seal; but the beast sank as soon as it was killed, and it was with no small difficulty that they secured him.

Lord Ravenscroft slew a couple; but the creatures dived so quickly, that many blows were struck in vain.

Now and then one bolder than the rest would try to force its way seaward, but the party on the shallow did not permit one to pass.

The sport had lasted at least three quarters of an

hour, when the water becoming deeper, reminded the invaders it was time to retreat. Perhaps it was the fresh stream flowing in that awakened new hope in the hearts of the hunted seals, stimulating them to fresh efforts to escape out of their black hole, at any rate more than one attempted to pass the guardians of the entrance, and Mr. Jones had the satisfaction of twice bleeding his stick.

"Look sharp, sir! look sharp!" cried he to the Rector, as an elderly inhabitant of the cave kept setting to the reverend gentleman, as if she were his partner in a quadrille. The Rector flourished his stick in one hand, and waved his torch in the other, like a priest about setting fire to some sacrificial pile. At last, in the midst of his calisthenics, the creature dived and attempted to pass between his legs, but its enemy snapped his knees together, and dropping torch and stick seized the beast by the tail. It was a brief but gallant struggle; the seal struck out with all its strength. "Help!" shouted the Rector, as he felt his footing giving way; "Help!" He could not stay the seaward progress of the brute, who fairly dragged him backward, and then rising suddenly tripped him on his face into the water.

"By gum!" shouted the sailor, "one of the beggars has walked off with the old parson. Hold on, sir! Hold on, like a galley nipper, and I'll stick your little pig for you." But the splash that told of

Mr. Apsly's immersion also announced the escape of his intended victim.

The tide having risen more than a foot, the slaughtered animals were collected and flung into the boat. It was with a sigh that the ladies observed that the dark sea-water was stained with blood.

"This is our last seal-hunt," said both simultaneously.

"All in?" cried Jones.

"All in, sir!"

"Shove off! Mason, burn that carmine light."

In another instant a bright pink flame lit up the dark rocks and black water with the loveliest rose-tinted light.

"Are you ready with that swivel? Now, ladies," said Jones; "you shall hear something like an echo. Fire!"

The report of the piece was almost deafening; the sound seemed to seek in vain for some aperture to escape, and was thrown back from roof and side in endless interchange; nor did the reverberation cease until the boat had shot far out on the still waters of the Race.

"In-shore again, sir."

In half an hour the ladies and the Apslys were landed; Jones and his friend rowed off to the yacht for dry clothes, and then strolled up to the cottage to supper.

The fate of the unhappy seals was soon forgotten

in the merry conversation that rippled round the table, and four at least of the party could hardly believe that midnight had come, when the hands of the time-piece on the sideboard pointed to one o'clock.

Lord Ravenscroft rose reluctantly. "Then," said he to the ladies; "I have the promise of both of you to attend the archery meeting at Filey on the twenty-ninth?"

"We are not members of the club."

"I'll see to that if you will consent to join."

"Certainly!"

Neither on board the yacht nor in the cottage did every one sleep immediately on going to bed that night.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the evening of the third day after the events recorded in the last chapter, Mrs. Maddocks was walking alone near the landing-place. What her reflections were we need not narrate, seeing that they could have had no relation to the circumstance about to be told, or at least in so very remote a degree that it would not repay us to trace the connection.

Suddenly, round the nearest point of land a boat appeared, rowed by a single oarsman. It was a light skiff, painted in Waterloo blue, and as it approached she observed it had a gilt moulding round the gunwale. Evidently it was no fisherman's craft; neither was the rower one who found his bread in the waters.

The boat touched the steps; a tall man rose up, took the painter in his hand, stepped ashore, and made his boat fast to an iron ring in the rock.

It was! No, it couldn't be! It was Mr. Jones!

Mrs. Maddocks's first idea was to retreat, and then a stronger impulse induced her to remain.

"What can he have come for? What villany has he been hatching?"

Jones now observing her raised his hat, and ascended the steps nearly to the top; when he remembered that as fortune had brought Mrs. Madocks to him, it would be just as well to converse without witnesses.

"Will you do me the favour to descend a few steps? I wish to make a communication to you, and it would be better to let my visit remain a secret."

"No!" was the answer which first rose to her lips; but whether from curiosity or because of some fascination he exercised over her will, she complied with his request, and slightly touched with her fingers his proffered hand, saying, "These private interviews with you are not suggestive of good fortune. What wretchedness are you now the herald of?"

"I come," said Jones, "not to threaten you with woes, but to preserve you from evil; and I feel confident you know what is the precise object of my visit."

He looked his companion full in the face; but her composure was not ruffled by his stare.

She too eyed him narrowly, and observed almost with a feeling of dismay, an expression of tenderness flash across his countenance.

To be hated or persecuted by him were issues for

which she was prepared; but she had not contemplated the possibility of becoming the object of his regard: that was a fate too terrible to think of.

"And can't you guess why I have come to St. Helen's?"

"I presume to remind me of the mutability of human affairs, of the instability of riches, of the necessity of preparing for another world, and that you want money."

Jones smiled at this sarcasm.

"Your penetration," said he, "fails you this morning. I will tell you of my doings for the last few years, and then perhaps you will understand the motive that brings me here. I started in life as most men start, with a devil and angel on either side. The demon was named 'Ambition,' the angel, 'Love.' Don't start! I speak the honest truth. The demon wrestled with and threw the angel. I panted for riches, for place, for power. I sacrificed everything at the fiend's bidding. The first and greatest sacrifice was yourself."

Here his companion grew white with rage, and said, "I cannot listen to such nonsense. You will have the goodness to leave me."

"Pardon me," said Jones; "it is necessary that you should hear what I have to say. I never faltered in the pursuit of this master idea. I married for money; I schemed for money. You yourself helped me to some thousands. I acted as the founder of the great

London banking-house, my namesake, did. When I made a shilling I held fast to eleven pence; when I saved a pound I grasped tightly nineteen shillings. The snow-ball began to roll, it grew, and I am rich. Men worship me, women fawn upon me, and I—— am miserable. To one person only in the world could I make this admission. And why am I wretched? because the angel, though thrown, was never wholly subdued, and in its turn has banished the demon."

"Have you the assurance," said Mrs. Maddocks, "to make such a statement to me, whose life has been wrecked by your villany? It passes my understanding that there should be such effrontery in the world."

"I am not surprised that you doubt me," said Jones. "But as a proof of my sincerity, let me tell you, that I have kept incessant watch upon your movements from the day of the Squire's death. You fancied you were in retirement in France. I myself saw you in the streets of Avignon; and could show you in my diary how you employed yourself at St. Germain's. Why this espionage, you ask. I answer, because I hoped some day to begin life again, when of course I should be free from those matrimonial shackles which now fetter me."

"Surely," said Mrs. Maddocks, with a curling lip, "the life of that poor old woman who calls you husband ought not to prove an obstacle to your

happiness. A person like yourself, possessed of so many resources, would know how easy it would be to remove her."

"There is no occasion to trouble myself on that score. The poor creature is afflicted with an incurable disease, and cannot live many weeks."

"How truly fortunate! Have you anything else to propose?"

"The time," said Jones, "has not arrived when I can *propose* anything. At present I can only darkly indicate my wishes, leaving it to your astuteness to penetrate my meaning, and to your goodness to appreciate my motives."

"I always thought," said Mrs. Maddocks, "that you were a clever man. That you would have necessarily understood, that for no earthly consideration could I possibly regard you as a friend, or tolerate you as an acquaintance, and yet you invade my home, and thrust yourself upon my privacy. I wish you good evening!"

"Will nothing move you? Have you no mercy, no forgiveness for me? We are both of us comparatively young; when I am free there might be yet a glorious career before us. Providence rarely permits two persons such an opportunity to cancel past errors as we possess."

"I forbid you, sir, to couple my name even in thought with yours, much less in speech. I can hear no more of your cant, and cowardly insults."

"Do not make me your enemy."

"You have ever been so."

"Do not let me injure you."

"I dare you!"

"Withdraw that word, I implore you! Evil as my days have been, I desire to mend them; and you can yet make earth a paradise for me. Do not look so contemptuously on me; we are bound as indissolubly together as the fabled twins of old. As enemies we can torment each other, as allies we can ensure a blissful existence."

"Again I command you never to unite my name with yours, even in imagination. And if there were one drop of mercy in that ocean of selfishness in which you revel, you—remembering the past, and all I have endured for your sake—would never venture into my presence again."

"It is for that reason that I now come forward. It is the memory of all you have done and suffered for me, which proves indubitably that your happiness and mine are identical."

Mrs. Maddocks, turning on her heel, disdained to answer, and commenced to ascend the steps.

"Stay," said Jones, "I have more to say which you must hear. There shall be no more mistakes between us. I do not wish to extract a confession from you; but as I know you dream of a coronet, I solemnly swear to you, that while I live no other man than myself shall call you wife."

Startled at this proof of Jones's penetration, Mrs. Maddocks replied, that such groundless insinuations needed no contradiction.

"True or false; I will take care of the issue! You know you are at my mercy, and at present you seem resolved to compel me to give you proof of my constraining power."

"You threaten me then with divulging that family secret which I paid you so handsomely to keep?"

"I anticipated this taunt, and am prepared to meet it. It gives me great pleasure to repay you your kind loan." Taking out his pocket-book, he handed her a cheque for 7000*l*.

Mrs. Maddocks tore up the paper, and flung the fragments into the sea.

"That's a pity, you may need it some day!"

"If I were a man, I'd shoot you. I am but a woman, yet I defy you. Neither threats nor cajolery can move me to regard you as other than a foe. Between us there rolls an impassable flood of hideous memories. Go your way. In peace, if you prefer; if in wrath, I care not. You are more in my power than I am in yours; and should you give me occasion, I will dedicate the remainder of my life to revenge." Tripping up the steps, she turned at the top and extending her arm, cried out—"Beware!"

Jones slowly walked to his boat, and shoved off listlessly. "Cost what it may," he muttered; "I

will not be defeated." Then dipping his oars in the water he slowly rowed away.

Sleep and Mrs. Maddocks knew not each other that night. War had been proclaimed. War to the knife. How could she crush her enemy without injuring herself?

It was a difficult problem to solve. The first step she resolved upon was to return to Surdon Hall.

CHAPTER V.

ONCE more at the old Hall! After treeless St. Helen's, its woods and pleasure-grounds were doubly dear. The island had many charms; its rocks and caves, the wondrous golden sunsets almost tearfully watched from its cliffs; the ever-shifting play of light and colour on the water, the ceaseless motions of the tides, the countless sea-birds, were attractions sufficient to have rendered it a paradise had the mind of her who owned it been at rest. But the dream of ambition, the hope that her life might soon orb into a more perfect existence, rendered it impossible for her to be happy apart from that world wherein her destiny was to be fulfilled; perhaps joyously accomplished, or it may be, embittered by disappointment. At any rate the stake was worth playing for.

On the next day after their arrival, the groom was sent into Arlerigge to purchase bows, arrows, and targets. Mrs. Maddocks had resolved that neither Mary nor herself would shoot at Filey unless they could acquit themselves respectably. Ford's book

was also purchased, and all the mysteries of knocking, drawing, and aiming, were attentively studied.

A piece of ground was selected, the targets were pitched, and after half an hour's hard work both ladies had so blistered their fingers and bruised their arms that they had to desist, and, save one or two hits, the paint of the targets was unscratched.

"We must send for Arthur Apsly," said Mrs. Maddocks, "to give us a lesson."

That evening the invitation was forwarded to St. Olaf's. Of course it included the Rector; but it was addressed to his son.

"Hum," said Mr. Apsly, after reading the note. "Have you any other engagement, Arthur?"

"No, sir."

"Then you may accept for both of us," Arthur smiled, and obeyed.

The Rector was thrown into a very amiable mood by this early expressed desire on the part of his late hostess, to renew the social intercourse so inopportunately broken in upon at St. Helen's.

"I thought I could not have deceived myself as to the state, the real state of her mind; but really she was so changed in the presence of Lord Ravenscroft, that my faith was momentarily shaken; but no sooner does she return to the Hall than she becomes conscious of a want. Some day I shall tell her how similar our feelings have been since we parted at St. Helen's."

"Did you speak, sir?"

"No, my boy."

"You don't usually think aloud!" An observation of this kind would usually have irritated the Rector exceedingly. But so pleasant were his half-spoken reflections, that he omitted to comment on his son's remark, and instead of a testy answer, he said—

"I've been thinking much of your welfare lately, Arthur."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. It is impossible for a father to divest himself of that natural anxiety for his son's happiness which I at all times feel for yours. Why don't you propose to Mary Maddocks, Arthur? You may reply: 'Your means are insufficient.' Granted that they are so at present; but if you choose to marry her I shall in a very short time be able to allow you two hundred a year, and with her fortune and your chance of preferment you might live happily."

"I thought, sir, you generally had an overdrawn account at your banker's. May I ask, do you expect a legacy from any one, that you thus make me this offer?"

"No, Arthur; I expect no legacy; but, nevertheless, many things more improbable have happened, than that I should shortly have a largely increased income."

"On my word, my dear sir, I cannot fathom these

sibylline utterances. It may be prejudice, I admit, but I confess I should prefer to have your positive promise before I commit myself."

"Arthur, my dear boy, you should have faith. It's a great thing to exhibit faith in your seniors."

"If tradesmen only would have faith in my I O U's I should be very happy to practise it."

Arthur was in a captious humour, and by tacit consent on both sides the conversation dropped.

"At what time do you expect the Apslys?" asked Mary at breakfast next morning.

"At two, to lunch."

Shortly after the appointed hour the Rector and Arthur arrived, duly provided with bows and arrows.

"I had no idea that you were a toxophilite," said Mrs. Maddocks to the former. She enjoyed chaffing the elderly young clergyman.

"Why shouldn't I, why shouldn't I, my dear madam?"

"I don't know why; only one is apt to fancy that people are fond of certain amusements and dislike others, and I imagined archery was not among your accomplishments."

The Rector really was a very fair shot—a better one than his son; and it afforded him unmingled satisfaction to exhibit his skill, and lay down the law for the benefit of the beginners.

"You must stand sideways, Mrs. Maddocks, and look only at the gold: the sympathy between your

hand and eye will direct the arrow almost unconsciously to yourself."

Several ends were shot with varying success, and then Mr. Apsly proposed sides—Mrs. Maddocks and himself against Mary and Arthur.

Both ladies were anxious to excel, and carefully endeavoured to follow the advice of their instructors; but Mrs. Maddocks's arrows were constantly flying over the mark. At last a stronger bow was selected, and, shooting nearly point-blank, she soon improved, and hit after hit rewarded her perseverance. The Rector noticed her strength of arm, due doubtless to former hard work; and directed his pupil to draw the arrow to her eye, and look over it as a gentleman would do, only aiming at the top of the target. The result of this advice was three hits out of five, and one of them a gold.

"Bravo!" shouted her instructor. "Victory will soon be ours."

The lesson over, both gentlemen lingered as long as they could decently. The conversation, however, was confined to bows and arrows; and no skill of father or son could divert it from this channel.

"I shall come over this day week," said the Rector, as he said good-bye, "to see what progress you make."

Mrs. Maddocks thanked him smilingly—adding to herself, "I shan't stay at home purposely to receive you."

The Rector, however, returned to St. Olaf's in excellent spirits.

Day after day mother and daughter practised archery for hours. Both knew they would be subjects of criticism at the meeting; and for the sake of Lord Ravenscroft, as well as for their own credit, they resolved that their début should at least be creditable. So enthusiastic were they that not even the summer sun could keep them indoors, but at last they discovered that their complexions were suffering in spite of their sun-bonnets.

What was to be done? To give up shooting, and to appear in public as freckled beauties, were alike impossible.

"I have it!" said Mrs. Maddocks, one evening when they were debating the question. "We'll shoot in the wood!"

Next day a clear vista of a hundred yards was sought for in vain: sixty, seventy could be found.

"If you were to cut down those two trees," pointing to a pair of splendid oaks, "we should have a nice piece of ground."

"Of course, my dear. How stupid I am!"

That afternoon the doom of the patriarchs of the wood was sealed, as they came down crashing amongst their fellows.

The old forester swore at the wickedness of felling timber in July. 'Twas worse, he said, than seething

a goat in his mother's milk. He did not think it needful to explain the analogy.

"I'll tell you what we'll also do, Mary. We'll have an awning put up at one end, fastened to the boughs of the trees, and instead of walking to and fro we can sit down while Simkins brings back the arrows."

"Shan't we lose a great deal of time by this plan?"

"Yes; but we shall shoot steadier by not straining our arms."

Thus mother and daughter cheated the sunbeams, and worked hard to gain a reputation as first-rate shots. That there was another issue also at stake did not diminish their zeal. The only day they did not practise was the afternoon the Apslys called, when they drove into Arlerigge.

"Women," said the Rector, as he turned his horse's head down the avenue, "are all coquettes; even the best of them."

CHAPTER VI.

AT last the morning of the eventful twenty-ninth arrived.

Mrs. Maddocks had some days previously received her own and Mary's tickets of membership, therefore they had a right to attend the meeting; nevertheless she felt nervous, and ere the day commenced wished it was over.

To be a member of the Arcadian Archery Club was equivalent, in Arcady at least, to being a member of Brookes's or the Rag: the honour conferred equal privileges on both sexes. When Mrs. St. John, at the instigation of Lord Ravenscroft, proposed Mrs. and Miss Maddocks as members, several ladies raised their eyebrows; but his Lordship's influence was paramount, except when the Earl or the Countess of Westerwork were present. At the hour of balloting neither of these great people, nor any of their family, attended; and no black balls appeared among the white ones. Three would have been fatal. It was a very select Club.

: Lady Westerwork was heard to say afterwards it was a hole-and-corner affair. When it is stated that the usual formal notice was given, and that her Ladyship had been informed of the proceeding by Lady Bellaton, it will be conceded that the Countess hardly kept within the bounds of truth when she made this assertion. The fact is her Ladyship, supported by her eldest daughter and Lady Bellaton, fully intended to black-ball Mrs. and Miss Maddocks; but owing to the stupidity or awkwardness, or wilfulness, on the part of her coachman, who managed to throw down one of the horses and break the pole of the carriage in which she had set out for Arlerigge, she arrived half-an-hour late; and her friend Lady B., unsupported by the Countess, meekly dropped a white ball into the box.

Filey was the family seat of the Westerworks—an old-fashioned, rectangular brick pile, the doors and windows being ornamented with a border of free-stone. It contained an abundance of room, and might have made a comfortable cavalry barrack. The grounds were undeniably fine: well-wooded, and sloping gradually down to a very handsome and extensive piece of artificial water that bounded the bottom of the park.

The family consisted of the Earl, a tall, portly, good-natured, red-faced English gentleman; the Countess, a pale, thin, peevish-looking woman, and a lady in her own right. Among other attractions

she possessed a pair of keen, small, grey eyes; a large, high nose; a low, retreating forehead; a small rabbit mouth; and very delicate feet and ankles, of which she was remarkably proud. She walked with her chin in the air, and in public paced as if she were marching to slow music.

Her eldest daughter, Lady Wilhelmina, was a younger edition of herself. The second, Lady Jane, would have been a pretty blonde had she possessed less *embonpoint*. Her features were small and regular, and her expression singularly winning. It is almost needless to state that she was her father's ally.

To be intimate at Filey was to stand on the pinnacle of social greatness; few attained to this distinction. To visit at Filey was sufficient reputation for even extraordinary Arcadian mortals.

The reader will now thoroughly understand that Mrs. Maddocks had reason to be nervous when her barouche whirled by the great lodge, and she found herself within the boundary of the Elysian fields an expected but uninvited guest, knowing that in a few minutes a hundred ladies' eyes, many of them strangers, would be turned inquisitively on her and her daughter. She had purposely delayed her visit to the last moment, so as to find shelter in the crowd, and when she arrived in sight of the lawn she found nearly everybody had assembled. As the carriage drew up the first person she recognised was Lord Ravenscroft, who immediately came forward to receive

her. Arthur Apsly was also in attendance, and mother and daughter were at once provided with an escort.

"It is so considerate of you to be here, my Lord; there are such a heap of strangers, and there is no loneliness like that of crowds."

"After being the means of inducing you to come here, you would not expect me to absent myself."

"May I not consider it a free service rather than an obligation?"

His Lordship bowed. "Here comes Lady Westerwork; let me introduce you."

The Countess approached, and, bowing to his Lordship, was about to pass on, but he putting out his hand, obliged her to stop, and, seizing the opportunity, he said, "Let me introduce Mrs. and Miss Maddocks."

The Countess threw back her head, and curtsied profoundly. Evidently it was an ironical greeting. Mrs. Maddocks and Mary bowed haughtily, instead of being overwhelmed. Clearly the Countess was outmanœuvred, and felt it, as was shown by a bright rouge-like spot on each cheek.

This ordeal accomplished, and some time having to elapse before the shooting commenced, Mrs. Maddocks and Mary, attended by his Lordship and Arthur, walked up and down the slopes, exchanging greetings with those they knew, and attracting the attention of every one.

It is the fashion among a certain class of writers

and ranters to rail against exclusiveness—against cliques and coteries. Such rhodomontade invariably emanates from vulgar people suffering from the effects of the time-honoured practice of well-bred folk, and it displays a lamentable ignorance of the laws of nature.

Let any observer notice the habits of a herd of (if he please thoroughbred) cows. In the morning they come quietly in from the pastures, politely listen to the pastoral hymns of the milkmaids, then return to the fields, graze, lie down, and chew the cud of sweet and bitter herbs. Occasionally whisking their tails over their backs, no ladies could more listlessly fan themselves in their opera-boxes than they in the meadows drive off the flies. Theirs is a peaceful, quiet, well-ordered existence. But presently the gate opens, and a strange cow is introduced to their notice. It might be a cow as well-bred as themselves, or it might be one of the vulgar herd. It's all one: everything is lost sight of in the fact that the stranger is unknown. The leading matron rises instantly from her couch, and sounds a short note of alarm that disturbs the repose of her companions. All languor is forgotten in the terrible thought that their set has been invaded. The stern dame distends her nostrils, slashes her side with her tail, snuffs the air, and moves forward slowly. The intruder stands trembling. The old cow approaches, and, when near enough, sticks her horn into the new

comer's ribs, who at first tries to believe the attention, though pointed, is meant to be playful. While this thought passes through her mind, another dame comes up bellowing, and is even more demonstrative than the first; a third hurries to the front in defence of the prescriptive rights of the herd; the same feeling flies through all the rest, and from every part of the field all the cows are seen converging to one point, some with their heels in the air and tails on end, others tossing imaginary cows on their horns, until the unhappy stranger is glad to escape with a few holes in her skin and sundry inscriptions on her flanks and rear.

He, then, who despises exclusiveness is an ignorant contemner of a primary natural law.

Mrs. and Miss Maddocks were not only strangers but Samaritans, as Lady Westerwork had shown when she curtsied so deeply to the mother; therefore herself and the rest of the Jews could not notice the new comers, except as the cows do, by tossing their heads and sounding little notes of alarm.

Happily, however, for our friends, Lord Ravenscroft had a party among the Arcadians, and whatever lady he delighted to honour was always sure of a certain amount of consideration; and although Lady Bellaton coincided in all that the Countess had said in disparagement of the Maddockses, she chatted very cordially with both of them, before the shooting commenced. The Earl did not follow his

wife's example; and he, as well as Lady Jane, said many civil things to the two lovely women who graced his lawn. Their conduct did not pass unnoticed, and served to decide some waverers, to be polite to the strangers, should occasion offer. This treatment of his guests was the source of a good deal of annoyance to his Lordship and Lady Jane, as the Countess did not scruple to remark, that he was a bad man, a faithless husband, and an unprincipled father, to allow his daughter to enter into conversation with such a notorious person as Mrs. Maddocks. Of course, this remark was reserved for a moment of happy domestic privacy, when husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, considerably hold up the mirror to each other.

Lord Ravenscroft was, as a peer should be, chivalrous and courageous; and having induced the Maddockses to attend the meeting, he was hurt and mortified to find that that venomous old creature (his Lordship in a cooler moment would have omitted the epithet) had had the bad taste to be rude. He reflected that if all the stories, or if only a tithe of the current stories, were true, there were incidents even in the Westerwork history better suppressed than published; and as he looked around him, he observed several individuals whose family annals were not what they might have been. He carefully avoided letting his companions suspect that he had attentively noticed every feature in their reception. Chat-

ting in his liveliest and pleasantest manner, neither Mrs. Maddocks nor Mary imagined that he was in other than the happiest frame of mind.

"You must be tired, ladies; do let me get you seats. There are a couple near Mrs. St. John, I see."

Other people came up; several gentlemen begged to be introduced, and half the ladies were mad with jealousy at the attention paid to the new members.

Mrs. Maddocks had expected a cool reception; but this was more than compensated for by her subsequent triumph. Mary must not be omitted; even her own sex confessed she was very handsome; and it was remarked that when she and her mother sat down, Lord Ravenscroft sat on the turf at her feet, and addressed most of his conversation to her, much to the chagrin of Arthur Apsly, who, however, derived some comfort when he perceived that the young lady took no pains to make herself agreeable to his Lordship.

At last the shooting began.

Except that archery is an out-door game, in which both sexes can join, it has nothing to recommend it to the youth of Britain. It may be an agreeable pastime for the emasculated swells of idle towns, who wouldn't for the world ruffle their shirt-fronts at rackets, or risk the integrity of their shins at cricket, but it is utterly beneath the notice of men or boys, save as an amusement in which ladies may distinguish themselves.

To do the Arcadians justice, they value the sport at its true worth, and duly appreciate the pleasure of chaffing the pretty girls, whose deadliest weapons are their eyes and tongues.

Mary was very successful, and distanced many a reputed shot. Mrs. Maddocks, however, was second to none at the meeting; but more than one noticed her unusual strength, and ascribed it to her early training, when Lord Ravenscroft was out of hearing.

Lady Jane was soon discomfited in the contest for the county prize. "If you ever desire success," said her mother, "you must begin by becoming a dairy-maid." Mrs. St. John heard this speech, smiled, and laughingly repeated it to his Lordship, who bit his lip, and secretly vowed vengeance.

One by one the different competitors were beaten—that is to say, they got so far behind as to give up shooting. At last the score was added up, when Lady Wilhelmina and Mrs. Maddocks were found to be ties.

The announcement of the fact caused a good deal of excitement, and several bets were laid as to the final result. After some consideration, the managers resolved that the issue should be decided by the greatest number of points in three shots.

Mrs. Maddocks's dark eyes flashed with excitement, and her cheeks were tinged with colour. "I would give a thousand pounds to beat her Ladyship," was her half-whispered remark to Lord Ravenscroft.

"I have no fear of the result," said he, encouragingly.

Lady Wilhelmina also had her partisans, who looked up to her as a representative woman on the occasion. Surely the daughter of an Earl was not to be defeated on her father's lawn by a *parvenue*.

"Don't be agitated, my dear," said the Countess.

Everybody knows that there is no such disquieting influence as the absurd advice "to be cool," when every nerve is strung to breaking point. The young lady momentarily regretted that her respected parent was not the target for the deciding shot.

The expected moment came.

Her ladyship, asserting her precedency, fired first, and narrowly escaped missing the target.

Mrs. Maddocks raised her bow, and scored a centre, amid a murmur of applause.

Her opponent's next shot was equally good, and she tossed her head triumphantly.

Mrs. Maddocks then made an inner white.

There was yet hope for the peerage, as another red was marked for her Ladyship.

This was a fine opportunity for Mrs. Maddocks to perform a graceful act. It only needed a careless shot to avoid making an enemy of her antagonist; but whatever sins might be chargeable against her, she was destitute of the detestable offence of flunkeyism. And now the eyes of all Arcady were upon her. Lord Ravenscroft too was nervously looking on.

Not to gratify the vanity of all the earls' daughters in Europe would she forego the honour and pleasure of winning the prize. Amid a dead silence, she steadily drew her bow, and planted her arrow in the gold.

"A mere fluke!" said Lady Wilhelmina, walking directly into the house.

It was the custom at these archery meetings for all the members to lunch at the house of the person in whose grounds they assembled; and it was not an absolute necessity that every one should be on visiting terms, since to attend these meetings was not equivalent to having the *entrée* at all the houses where they were held. When it happened that strangers were present, or when new people joined not known to the host or hostess, it was the rule to invite them to partake of refreshments; but the Countess resolved that if the mistress of Surdon Hall entered the doors of Filey, she should be an unbidden guest.

No sooner, however, was the match decided, than Mrs. Maddocks asked Arthur to order her carriage. Good-natured Lady Jane heard the request, and ran off to tell the Earl.

"This musn't be," said his Lordship, hurrying off to find the Countess. Taking her aside, he whispered, "For heaven's sake ask the Maddockses in."

"Certainly not, my lord!"

"Don't make a fool of yourself now and disgrace

me. I particularly request you to be civil to these people."

"That woman shall never enter Filey by my request as long as I am alive!"

His Lordship delivered himself of a severe remark, and ran out to consult with Lady Jane, who was waiting his return beneath the portico.

"Come with me, dear, and invite the Maddocks to lunch."

In vain both father and daughter urged the ladies to come in. Mrs. Maddocks smiled, thanked them, regretted she couldn't stay. Really grateful to the Earl and Lady Jane, she cordially shook hands with them, and got into her carriage.

"I cannot tell you, Mrs. Maddocks, how sorry I am that you should run away."

"Thank you very much, my Lord; but we cannot possibly remain!"

Had Lady Westerwork designed the greatest kindness towards Mrs. Maddocks she couldn't have succeeded so well in pleasing her, if she had adopted any other line of conduct than that she selected, since her opposition was all that was required to make Lord Ravenscroft a partisan and supporter of the ladies he had been the means of bringing to the meeting.

"Have you a spare seat?" said he, leaning over the side of the barouche in which Arthur Apely had found room.

“Oh, yes!”

The Countess felt constrained to watch the departure of the people she would not know; and she and her eldest daughter bit their lips when they observed how their stratagem had worked.

The news in the Arlerigge reading-room was—that Lord Ravenscroft was going to marry the widow, and Arthur Apsly was engaged to the daughter.

CHAPTER VII.

MARY MADDOCKS, who had never heard her mother's history, and only knew that her maternal grandparents were poor people, could not fully appreciate the full extent of the feeling that manifested itself in the Countess of Westerwork's intentional slight, therefore she could not palliate her Ladyship's conduct in the slightest degree, and as soon as they were alone, she was very severe on the great woman. But to Mrs. Maddocks the treatment she had experienced was a stimulant urging her to press up the social ladder—in other words, to become a peeress, if possible. Apart from these considerations, she entertained a very deep regard for Lord Ravenscroft. He had behaved so well, had shown himself to be true, and was evidently desirous of her friendship; therefore, if she acknowledged to herself the awakening of a tenderer feeling than regard for his Lordship, no one admitted to a knowledge of the secret will blame her.

Long years had passed since she knew the meaning of love, except for Mary; and now it came,

"Soft as the airs that gently steal
When meres begin to uncongeal,"

giving a depth and intensity to the meaning of life she had never known before. For if in those old days the power was present within her, she could not in her ignorance understand all that the soul enjoys, when in its development it meets with the one whom to love is to be satisfied with.

Once it was a blind instinct, akin to a demoniac possession; now it was an intelligent exercise of the highest faculties of her spiritual nature.

For love is in degree, and rises upward in purity and intensity from brute to barbarian, and from barbarian to the thinking man. The philosopher is not necessarily the best lover; but he who loves with heart, and soul, and mind, surely loves better than the churl who seeks a helpmate, as he buys a hat—something that will fit his head, and cost little money, the shape and texture being of no consideration.

This awakening of affection for Lord Ravenscroft was to its subject almost like becoming possessed of the use of some long dormant sense; and all the earth grew more beautiful, and life was in itself delight, under the influence of this new experience.

These hopes and aspirations were, alas! inseparable from the reflection that a woman is always at the mercy of a man's caprice. If he choose to avoid her society she cannot follow. Should he wish to trifle, she cannot do other than submit, and that

opportunity which Mrs. Maddocks desired, Lord Ravenscroft alone could give. It is not easy to remain passive when important issues may for ever be sacrificed for lack of action. It is doubly tantalizing to feel that that very action would be fatal, and that forced inactivity is the only alternative that remains.

Days passed and no visitor approached the Hall. Its loneliness and solitude grew painful. The elder lady felt she might be deluding herself with a chimaera; the younger had her own trouble, scarcely confessed to herself. One afternoon Mrs. Maddocks was returning from a visit of mercy to a sick cottage, and had nearly reached the lodge, when she observed a man approach, who, from his unsteady gait, was evidently intoxicated.

Naturally courageous, she walked on without hesitation; and, as she passed the stranger, it occurred to her that she had seen him before. Of course she had; it was young Milkwort, as he used to be called, —now a burly bloated sot.

He stopped as Mrs. Maddocks passed, rubbed his eyes, and exclaimed, "It's Sally, by ——; I mean the Squire's widow. Hallo, marm! Mrs. Maddocks! Stop a bit if you please, marm!"

"If I run away," she thought, "he'll 'chase me, and that would be a pretty scene. I had better speak to him civilly." Whereupon she stopped.

Milkwort came up and put out his hand. "I'm

proud to see you, marm, looking so—spry as a daisy. Ay, if I's never to muv!"

"Thank ye, Mr. Milkwort, I'm quite well. Good morning. I'm in a hurry now."

"That's just it; nivir se'n ye this years, and now yer in a hurry. I'm 'n no hurry, that's all I knows; and, by blowed, yer better looking than—than ever I seed you."

Mrs. Maddocks, making no reply, continued her walk; but her old acquaintance was not to be thrown off so easily.

"It's—not right," he said, "that a good—good looking woman like you should be about in the roads by yerself—ye doant know what drunken body you might meet. Only now as I'm here I'll see you home—in coorse I will—I—I—I'm not the man to—to leave a good—good looking woman to—to walk alone by hersel, and—and nobody with her."

"Thank you, Milkwort, I can get home without your help."

"You doant know what yer saying—yer only a babby this blessed minit, and I must look after ye."

"Good morning." Mrs. Maddocks made a step forward, but Milkwort seized her dress.

"Gently now, my dear. Wo-o, she now!"

"Let go! Let me alone!"

"Will ye give me a glass o' beer, or rum-and-water? I haven't had a drop this daay."

Mrs. Maddocks was in a dilemma. She was not alarmed, because she felt it would have been an easy task to have knocked the brute down. Yet how to get loose without a struggle, and yet to avoid that struggle, puzzled her. Again she cried, "Let me go, you wretch! D'ye hear, sir, let me go!" and tried to wrench her dress out of his clutch. The fellow still held on; but now a horse was heard approaching, only a turn in the road hid him. "Help!" shouted Mrs. Maddocks; and, before she knew who the rider was, a blow in the face with a riding-whip had sent her assailant reeling into the ditch.

"Oh, Lord Ravenscroft, how thankful I am!"

"My dear lady, I am delighted to have rendered you this assistance. But who is the scoundrel?"

"A tenant formerly on the estate; but now a miserable sot. If I remember right his name is Milkwort."

"I must identify him." Whereupon his Lordship rode up to the culprit.

Milkwort was not too drunk to recognize faces.

"Ah," said he, "I knows ye; I'll make you— you smart for this, you — proud —. You think you can ride over poor people because you're a Lord; but I'll make you know — know better, you — coward!"

"You're not hurt in any way, I hope?" said his Lordship to Mrs. Maddocks.

"Neither hurt nor frightened, thank you; but very much disgusted."

"You'll prosecute the wretch, of course?"

"That all Arcady might laugh at my expense, and that the Countess of Westerwork might hear of my name being bandied about in the police courts; that there might be a full bench of Daniels on the judgment-seat, Reverend J. P's to snuffle over my evidence, before a room full of idle Arleriggites, staring at you and me, 'accommodated,' as the reporters say, with seats in some conspicuous part of the hall? Oh, dear me, no; I wouldn't afford so much amusement to my neighbours for the best farm on the estate."

"By Jove! I think you're right!" said his Lordship, amused at his companion's shrewd appreciation of the manners of the country. He had dismounted, and, with the rein thrown over his arm, walked beside Mrs. Maddocks.

"I was *en route* to the Hall when I met you."

"Don't let your good intentions then fall short of their fulfilment."

"Thanks. I am going up to town next week, and I thought I would offer to execute any commissions for you and Miss Maddocks."

"You are very good. But we shall be in London ourselves very shortly. I've not heard Jenny Lind, and as this is said to be her last season, I must not let the opportunity slip."

"How fortunate! What is your address?"

"I always stay at the Bath Hotel, Piccadilly."

By this time they had got half-way up the avenue, when Mary was seen approaching.

"Don't allude to my adventure in her presence," said her mother. "It will only make her nervous."

It was a very natural request. His Lordship did not think there was any *arrière pensée*.

A morning call, if it affords an opportunity for a *tête-à-tête*, is a fine field for the exercise of female tactics; but Lord Ravenscroft would not have his horse put up, as he was pressed for time, and, instead of going into the house, they strolled into the garden and gathered grapes.

Mary felt herself awkwardly placed, but could not decently run away and leave her mother mistress of the occasion. Indeed, his Lordship addressed a great deal of his conversation to her; but then he was so truly polite, and evidently did not wish to appear particular to one lady in the presence of the other.

Twenty minutes are soon used up in the society of two pretty women anxious to please. Lord Ravenscroft allowed twice that number to pass before he discovered the rapid flight of time, and hurriedly said good-bye, promising to call at the Bath Hotel in ten days.

"Isn't he a pleasant creature, Harriette?"

"Yes, dear."

"Don't you think him handsomer than Arthur Apsly?"

"No, I don't."

"I do."

"Oh, dear no, Mary. He cannot be called so good-looking as Arthur, who is positively beautiful; but he has many qualities to recommend beside good looks."

"I think you are a great favourite of his, Harriette."

"You naughty flatterer! But I know who loves the ground you walk on."

"Who?"

"Arthur, the Prince of Knights."

"I'm tired of his pretty face."

Mrs. Maddocks laughed, and shook her head.

"I fear you are a little hypocrite."

Mary answered with a sigh.

A few days after this Mrs. Maddocks was terribly annoyed and mortified at receiving a summons to appear at petty sessions to give evidence in the case of Thomas Milkwort *versus* George Lindisfarn Godfrey, commonly called Lord Ravenscroft.

How provoking! The publicity she had endeavoured to avoid would now be secured.

Mrs. Maddocks had no reason to suppose that Lord Ravenscroft was in ignorance of her early history; but it certainly would not tend to promote her wishes if all the past should be raked up before the Arlerigge bench; and, however much his Lordship might be disposed to look kindly on the widow

of a local magnate, he might not care to be reminded at every turn, and by every gossip in the county, from whence that widow sprung.

Reading the summons again, she saw Jones's name at the foot, and then the whole mystery was explained.

Milkwort had applied to him for a warrant. She saw him in imagination balancing in his mind, should he risk his friendship for Lord Ravenscroft by complying with the man's request for the sake of carrying out his vengeance against Mrs. Maddocks, or should he wait for some other opportunity. She fancied she heard him reasoning with himself: "Oh, I can easily persuade Ravenscroft that it would never have done for me to show partiality, much as I desired to preserve him from annoyance, when Milkwort would not be pacified or consent to forego the charge; and then I'll tell him that I used every argument to mollify the brute in vain. He is such an honourable fellow. I know he'll acquit me of any and every unworthy motive. And then, when all the story comes out in court, that Milkwort was only exercising the privilege of a friend, an old friend, to speak to an intimate acquaintance, won't he stare at my lady's family history?"

Mrs. Maddocks might have added, "At last her fine friends will leave her, and who will she have to fall back on except myself?"

After some moments' reflection she resolved to

summon her solicitor. He arrived in the afternoon, and soon set his client's mind at rest.

"I know Milkworth's game. He has run through everything, and can be bought cheaply. In fact he only wants hush money. I suppose I may settle with him on the best terms I can, taking care that your name does not transpire."

"Certainly."

The difficulty was arranged for twenty pounds. Mrs. Maddocks knew no peace of mind several days after this event. It was the beginning of that war which must end in her enemy's overthrow or her defeat. No compromise was possible on her part, and she looked for no consideration from her foe. Already she had been procrastinating; but how to commence her attack was as yet a mystery. It was the thought that lay beside her on her pillow, that followed her as a shadow all day. It depressed her spirit and wrote care on her face. Many months of this anxiety, thought she, as she looked in the glass a morning or two after this event, will soon make itself visible to all the world.

The Apslys heard of their intended visit to London, and called to bid them good-bye.

"How long will you be absent, Mrs. Maddocks?"

"I really cannot tell you; perhaps we may go into Scotland."

"I shall write to you every week," said Arthur, half in jest.

Mrs. Maddocks, thinking that his letters might be really acceptable to Mary despite her nonchalance, replied :

“ Do ; and remember I shall expect punctuality.”

“ I hope you will extend to the father the privilege you have accorded to the son,” said the Rector.

“ I’m afraid you’d write sermons.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Maddocks arrived in London according to their arrangements. Lord Ravenscroft called, escorted them to the opera, drove with them in Rotten Row, &c. In short, he made himself very agreeable, but studiously avoided exhibiting any preference for either lady. His friends asked who were those people that Ravenscroft was so attentive to? "He is always driving about with two sisters, deuced good-looking girls they are too."

Nobody seemed to know more than that they were country people. Arcadian friends, they supposed.

Meantime Mrs. Maddocks was anxious and depressed. The instinct of self-preservation urged her to be up and doing. Up and doing what? Yes, that was the question.

One morning, before she rose, her maid brought in a letter bearing the Arlerigge post-mark.

"From Arthur Apsly. What has he to say?"

"MY DEAR MRS. MADDOCKS,

" St. Olaff's, Arcady,

" August —, 18—.

" It required two hot lobster suppers, one dinner-party, and a fit of indigestion before the Rector could be in any degree reconciled to your absence. Even now his mind is very much disturbed, and I fear he will have to return to another application of the above remedy for an aching heart.

" As for myself, I count the hours till you return, and have rowed a dozen times round St. Helen's, conjuring up the images of yourself and Miss Maddocks, and listening as if I could catch the echo of your voices.

" 'What stuff!' ejaculates the reader.

" One of my boating excursions ended in an adventure. Only fancy an adventure in Arcady. The following are the particulars:—

" Two days ago I went out gurnet-fishing alone. The fish were very numerous, and the sport was excellent—so good, in fact, that I forgot how the time was flying, and that the wind would certainly go down with the sun.

" When at last I looked at my watch I found it was five o'clock, and then remembered that the flood would make in half an hour. The wind was fair for our harbour, and I thought I should get in; but in less than twenty minutes after I turned the boat's head home it fell a flat calm.

" My provisions consisted of water, a little whisky, some ship-biscuit, and my fresh-caught fish. I knew perfectly well that I should be obliged to make a night of it, so I lit a fire, and put on a gurnet to broil; if I had only had salt it would have been perfect; but even in spite of this deficiency I thoroughly enjoyed my dinner, and can praise my culinary skill.

" When I slipped from the moorings in the morning, I did not think it necessary to put the grapnel on board, which had been taken on shore the previous evening to have one of its claws repaired, consequently I was at the mercy of the tide, which must carry me up channel many a mile.

" The night closed; it was beautifully warm, and I reckoned on having a pleasant time, when suddenly one of the densest

fogs I ever remember dropped down on the water, just as if the air had become so rarefied, that the clouds had fallen on the sea.'

"My position was now anything but comfortable, as the boat had drifted in the track of the steamers, and having no light to exhibit, I might be run down at any moment without a chance of escape. I got the sweeps out, and after I judged I had drifted clear of St. Helen's, I commenced pulling, in the hopes of keeping nearer to the shore and more out of danger. I worked briskly for some hours, when I became thoroughly tired, and as I had no compass, perhaps, after all, I was doing more harm than good.

"Having no better occupation, I resumed my cooking, and soon prepared another fish for supper, which I washed down with cold grog; and, wrapping myself in a spare jib, I filled my pipe, and, leaning against the mast, stood on the look-out.

"Now and then a fish splashed, but, with this exception, there was not a sound on the sea. The sense of loneliness grew painful and the silence oppressed me, whereupon I crawled into the cuddy, arranged some more sails for a couch, and commending myself to God, fell asleep, lulled by the gentle lapping of the tide against the bows of the boat, as she drifted stern foremost.

"I woke, got up, and looked out. The fog was so thick I could not see my hand when I held it before my face.

"Striking a match I found it was twelve o'clock, and therefore knew that the tide had turned and was carrying me back; so I went to sleep again.

"How long this second nap lasted I cannot tell; but I was suddenly awakened by the clatter of footsteps overhead, where a voice shouted—'I'm ——! this arn't she arter all!' and another answered—'Get out of her, then, and be —— to ye!'

"I crept out as quickly as I could, and saw a boat alongside, and a man getting over the gunwale into her. I sprung forward, caught him by the neck, and pulled him back.

"'You came on board,' said I, 'uninvited, but you shan't leave without my permission. Who and what are you?'

"'Let me get up, and I'll tell you.

"'Let my mate go,' cried a fellow in the other boat, in a foreign

accent, 'or I'll make you.' Four to one was too great odds, so I allowed the intruder to regain his feet.

"What do you fellows want, and who are you?"

"We've bin dredging for land-lubbers, and caught you," was the answer, which elicited shouts of laughter, as they rowed away. After pulling off a few yards (the fog had in a great measure lifted), I heard the foreign vagabond say, 'Better scuttle her, boys.' The proposal evidently did not shock them, for they remained some time deliberating in low tones. Ultimately milder counsels prevailed, for they rowed away. You may imagine I slept no more, and gladly welcomed the first appearance of daylight. The breeze now sprung up from the northward, and enabled me to lay my course for home, or rather for the coast, which was below the horizon. Noon came; I was fearfully hungry; my bread was gone, my last match used, and not a drop of grog left. But St. Helen's was in sight and the wind fair. While I congratulated myself on this circumstance, with the usual capriciousness of summer gales it died away, and, remaining calm for some time, again sprung up right ahead, but light and uncertain. I began to have serious apprehensions of spending another night at sea, when a schooner-yacht made her appearance, coming northward through the Race, and, changing her course, bore down for my boat. A second glance showed me it was the 'Thalassa,' of all the craft afloat the only one I could not signal to for help, entertaining as I do a strong aversion to her owner. However, on she came, and as she approached I saw there were several ladies on board—evidently a pleasure-party. She passed, and then to my surprise luffed up and ran along-side of me, when Jones shouted out, 'Come on board! I'll send your craft home for you.' As if taking my acceptance for granted, the gig was manned and sent for me. I hesitated for some time. On one side of the picture was a pleasant party and plenty to eat, on the other starvation and perhaps another night at sea. So I overcame my scruples, and gave the charge of my boat to two of his men, who undertook to leave her at her moorings in Monk's Haven. One of the two was a foreigner, and when, in answer to the coxwain's order,

'Let go!' he shouted 'All gone!' I fancied, indeed I am sure, it was the voice of the man who a few hours before had said, 'Scuttle her.' My impulse was to return to my own little craft, but I thought it would appear silly, after getting into the gig, to change my mind immediately.

"I found several ladies on board the yacht, Mrs. St. John among the number. Of course Lady Bellaton was there also and her pretty niece. I confess it was a very pleasant party. Jones did his best to make himself agreeable, and this consisted in leaving me to myself (after the duties of the toilette were performed), with an abundance of luncheon and champagne. To my surprise I found we were bound to Lynmouth, where we arrived about nine o'clock, just in time for the ladies to dress for the ball. I hired a car, and drove to Arlerigge, which I reached about midnight, and home the next morning. The Rector was in the most fearful state of excitement, not only at my not having returned, but at the intelligence that my poor boat was a wreck just inside her moorings, and no one had tidings of me. The rascally men who took charge of her said she missed stays in coming to the moorings, and in wearing her they struck her on a heap of limestone. When the tide left, she of course fell over, and was utterly smashed. The men, as soon as they got on shore, made themselves scarce. I can't afford to supply the place of the 'Amelia' with another boat this year, so my yachting has come prematurely to an end.

"I had almost forgotten to tell you that I mentioned the midnight visit of the strange crew to Jones; he said the men were doubtless fishermen. I told him I thought not, as we were too far off the land, and suggested smugglers. 'Possible enough,' he said, 'if the whole race were not extinct.' It is a small mystery, can you suggest a solution?"

This letter not only made Mrs. Maddocks thoughtful, but it evidently gave rise to a very pleasant train of thought, such as we experience when light dawns on some tormenting doubt. In replying to this

letter, she asked Arthur to describe the foreign sailor. His answer was:—"He is below the middle height, has very round shoulders, a swarthy complexion, and coarse, irregular features; the lips stained with tobacco-juice."

"How stupid men are!" said the recipient of this letter. "He might just as well have told me that he has four fingers and a thumb on each hand; there is as much individuality about this sketch as between two needles in one packet, one of which is described as having a point at one end and an eye at the other."

Slight as this circumstance was, it induced her to take a cab, and drive to the Tower. When in that locality, she asked of the first waterman if there was a *depôt* for Arcadian slates in that neighbourhood. The man said, he never heard of a "*depôt*" for slates, but there was a large slate-yard the other side of the river, a little down.

Would he row her across, and show her the way? In course he would, provided her ladyship would give him half-a-crown. In half-an-hour she stood opposite a large gateway, on which was painted—

"ARCADIAN SLATE DEPÔT."

Pulling her veil down, she entered the yard, where the representatives of all the aristocracy of slates, from Queens to Countesses, were arranged in blocks. Proceeding to the office, she asked for the principal.

The head clerk made his appearance, and looked inquisitively at his visitor.

"I have some friends residing in Arcady, to whom I wish to send some packages of goods; and, having understood that you have vessels constantly going to and fro, I thought I might arrange with you to carry them."

The clerk bowed, said he was very sorry; two vessels had only left their wharf the day before; next week others would arrive, and there would be no difficulty in shipping any quantity of goods.

"Oh, my packages are not large."

"Large or small, ma'am, we shall be happy to serve you, ma'am."

"I will send my servant, then. Good morning!"

Accordingly, at the end of a week, in the garb (assumed at a hired lodging) of a respectable middle-aged, good-looking housekeeper, rather high-shouldered, she renewed her inquiries at the slate-yard for the conveyance of one or two packages to St. Olaff's.

"What name, ma'am?"

"Miss Prosser."

"Is that your name?"

"No—my mistress's."

"Who are the goods for?"

"The Rev. Mr. Apsly."

Prosser, Mrs. Maddocks knew, was the name of a niece of the Rector's.

"I think," said the clerk, "there's a smack alongside the wharf will take 'em in."

"Do you know the master?"

"Oh, yes! he's been in our employ the last ten years."

"I should like if you will show me both the vessel and the master."

"Certainly, ma'am : walk this way, if you please."

Threading her way through large squares of slate and slabs, she reached the wharf, and looked down on the deck and into the hold of a dirty little coaster of sixty tons, which had just discharged a cargo from the quarry.

"Is the Cap'n aboard?" said the clerk to a lubberly boy, poking his fingers, in lieu of tongs, between the bars of the caboose.

"He's down below."

"Call him up, then."

The boy obeyed ; and presently an ill-favoured swarthy-visaged, tobacco-stained, round-shouldered sailor shoved his unkempt head and half his body half-way through the companion, and stared, speechless, at the clerk and Mrs. Maddocks.

"This lady wants to know if you can find room for two or three light things she's going to send to St. Olaff's."

The sailor only shook his head.

"Haven't you got room, then, Cap'n?"

No answer—only the same mysterious shake.

"Is the man dumb?" said Mrs. Maddocks.

"La, bless you! he can chatter like a magpie when he likes. Give us an answer, my hearty!" said the clerk.

All he received in reply was a grunt.

"Funny," thought Mrs. Maddocks; "but I'll make him speak;" and, letting her umbrella go, it descended ferule foremost on the skull of the silent man, who, smarting with the pain, growled "*Sacré bleu!*"

"Oh, dear! I hope I haven't hurt him. Oh, do get me back my umbrella, Mr. What's-your-name! and, if you'll give the fellow a shilling for me, I shall be so much obliged—particularly if the vessel will take the things."

The clerk restored the missile with a smile. "I'm afraid, though," said he, "this vessel won't suit you."

"I'm afraid not either, sir; though I must say, for a servant, this man seems shockingly independent!"

"Oh!" replied her guide, "Mr. Jones is the best of masters. As soon as he is satisfied of the honesty of any one he employs, he lets him have a good deal of his own way, as long as his orders are obeyed."

"I wish he was here to order this man to be civil, then!"

"Don't distress yourself about the packages; I'll undertake, ma'am, to get them forwarded in three weeks' time, at least. I am sure the Master is most anxious to please every Arcadian."

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. MADDOCKS'S next step was to avail herself of the assistance of her London solicitor.

Mr. Jones's rate of progress had been so rapid that she fancied something might accrue to her advantage, if she could know a little more of his affairs; and her professional adviser might be able to assist her in the inquiry.

At the appointed hour the lawyer arrived. A tall, pale, shrewd, intelligent man, with close-set lips, evidently designed to retain secrets.

So cautious was Mr. Lipscombe, that he had acquired the habit before speaking of opening and shutting his mouth without uttering a syllable (when engaged on business) three or four times in succession, whereby he never was known to make a hasty speech or use an unguarded expression.

Mary left the room; and, as soon as they were alone, Mrs. Maddocks said—"I suppose sometimes in the course of your professional duties you are asked to obtain information as to the pecuniary position of

individuals. Have you at your disposal adequate means for pursuing an investigation of this kind?"

Mr. Lipscombe opened and shut his mouth and eyes simultaneously, looked hard at his client, and said—"Yes!"

"I presume it matters not whether the person is obscure or well known?"

First the pantomimic answer, and then the monosyllable "No!"

"Are these inquiries expensive?"

"Not generally."

"Now, to come to the point—Do you know anything of the affairs of Mr. Jones, the Member for Arlerigge?"

"Nothing whatever."

"How long before you can make yourself acquainted with his pecuniary position?"

"In forty-eight hours, if he is the man of substance he is supposed to be."

"If I call on you in your office next Tuesday, will you be able to satisfy my curiosity?"

"Have the goodness to state what particular inquiries you desire me to make."

"I wish you to ascertain if there are any mortgages on his estate, if he has a balance at his banker's, if he has any funded property, bank, or other shares."

"I can easily get that information for you."

"But, stay. Suppose, for example—I don't say, I don't even hint, that he is—but, for argument's sake

let us assume that Mr. Jones is an unscrupulous adventurer; that he has forged deeds to give as security; or that he has in any other way rendered himself amenable to the law—could you ascertain positively that he has not acted in this manner?"

"Doubtful, madam! Doubtful! But we'll see what can be done. If we discover anything suspicious, I dare say means will be found to get at the truth."

"Good morning, Mr. Lipscombe."

"Good morning, ma'am."

On the day agreed upon Mrs. Maddocks repaired to her lawyer's office. Mr. Lipscombe read as follows from some memoranda:—

"Our country agents write that Mr. Jones's pecuniary position is above suspicion; that all his landed property is unencumbered; that his slate speculation is a most lucrative one; that last week he offered twenty thousand pounds for some lands adjoining his demesne, and is supposed to be worth five times that sum.

"Our brokers on the Stock Exchange tell us that Mr. Jones is frequently a large operator: and that he has thirty thousand pounds in shares in various companies purchased for him by themselves."

"That is quite sufficient," said Mrs. Maddocks. "Nevertheless I disbelieve in the prosperity of the quarry; however let that pass. The next question is, assuming the quarry to be a commercial failure, how could he have become so rich in so short a time as twelve years?"

Mr. Lipscombe bowed. "Do you wish me, ma'am,

to trace Mr. Jones's career for you? I can do so if you like."

"No! But I still want your services to enable me to prove or disprove certain suspicions of mine, now rendered stronger by your inquiry—suspicions which I should have discarded had you told me that the honourable gentleman was a mere bubble. I have strong reason to suspect that Mr. Jones has not come honestly by his wealth."

Mr. Lipscombe merely looked hard. Another man would have exhibited the surprise he felt at this speech. Impugning the honour and honesty of an Arcadian magnate was no small responsibility.

Mrs. Maddocks then related Arthur's adventure, and her visit to the wharf in Bermondsey, and concluded her narrative in these words. "Although I cannot prove it now, I firmly believe that when the collector of the custom-house looks out through the river window of his office, he sees or may see in every craft discharging slates from Arcady, the bold yet quiet working of the largest and most perfect smuggling system that this country has been afflicted with for years."

Mr. Lipscombe opened his mouth oftener than usual when his client finished her little history. Rubbing his palm thoughtfully over his chin, he said, "I see no difficulty in the matter whatever. Only give the authorities a hint, and they will soon institute a searching inquiry."

"Of course they will. They will seize one or more of these vessels. What then? The master will be found to be the owner. Mr. Jones cannot be responsible for the conduct of every coasting master. The jackals will be punished and the lion will escape."

"Very true, ma'am! very true! But the authorities won't confine their operations to the Bermondsey wharf. They will set the coast-guard on the look-out. They will give notice to every exciseman, and therefore if there be anything to discover they will find it out."

"Do you fancy the lieutenant of a revenue cruiser would make an enemy of a man who dines with the First Lord of the Admiralty? Of course he will obey orders, but due warning will be given to Mr. Jones. Again, the exciseman obtained his appointment through the member for Arlerigge, and his predecessor Lechmere was made a supervisor at his request. I repeat, the issue will be the same: the moving spirit, the master-mind, will escape, though some of his subordinates will suffer."

"I don't wish to penetrate into your motives; but pray reflect if you have any other reasons than those you mentioned, why you should suspect Mr. Jones of smuggling on this vast scale?"

"Yes! he has acquired wealth more rapidly than he could possibly have done by honest means; and I perfectly well remember that when he was a

Baptist preacher, he connived at the secreting of smuggled malt in his chapel. Besides smuggling is innate in the Arcadians; like cheating, wrecking, and thieving, it becomes a part of their religion."

"But," said the lawyer, "I wonder Mr. Jones is not afraid of falling into the power of his neighbours and tenants."

"As a general rule, nine-tenths of mankind will conscientiously conspire to cheat the crown; but as for standing in awe of his tenantry, the idea is preposterous. Who is so hated as an informer? And again, you as a Londoner accustomed to the independence of the people, have no conception of the servility that prevails in our part of the country. If I asked my tenants to kiss my feet, they would do so. They can refuse a landlord nothing; if he cared to exercise them, he might still enjoy the privileges of the feudal system. But I am occupying your time, and rambling from the point. What I desire in this matter is this. I want all the evidence to be complete, and then when the authorities can be positively informed that in such a place on such a day they can put their hands on the most accomplished gang of smugglers the century has produced, I am ready to let off the bolt. Will you undertake to collect this evidence?"

"Certainly!"

"In what manner?"

"I must have time to think."

"Very well! And remember, after all reasonable expenses are paid, if you succeed in bringing this charge home to Mr. Jones, I will make you a present of a thousand pounds."

Mr. Lipscombe opened and shut his mouth noiselessly like an oyster, until his client left.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Mary and Agnes, attended by the Apslys, visited the Grange the fields were green with young corn. The summer had rolled by since then, and more things had ripened than the grain. The tares sown by the enemy had also sprung up and flourished, and Marston was troubled thereat.

As the consequence of extending the area of his labours he found that he had imported difficulties of a kind peculiar (in some of its aspects) to the working class.

The mere discipline for the purposes of work proved even easier than he had anticipated: he found it an equally facile task to manage twenty as ten, or eighty as thirty.

It required no more superintendence to watch two score men at work in one field than two. It was as simple to arrange for fifty beds as five, once his system of organization was complete. But his real difficulty consisted in managing his people out of

harness. The hours of leisure were always dreaded by him as soon as he perceived the elements of mischief at work.

The majority he never failed to control, but there were always wayward spirits whom nothing could subdue or regulate. Occasionally there were quarrels among the young men which ended in blows and heart-burnings. There were frequently scenes among the women which ended now and then in an appeal to arms.

Sometimes weeks would pass without any disturbance, then there would be a succession of rows, until often poor Marston felt that "the burden laid upon him was greater than he could bear." He encouraged cricket, quoits, gymnastics, and every kind of outdoor game for the men. Music, dancing, and fancy-work for the women. So the weeks rolled on, the harvest ripened, and all seemed happy and prosperous at the Grange.

One Sunday evening, after service was over, Marston and Lucy strolled down the lane to look at the most forward field of wheat.

He had preached that evening from the words, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few."

The rich corn-field was all a-glow with the western sunbeams, and gently tremulous in the soft breeze that made sweet music among the laden ears.

"This," said Lucy, "must be what the world was once like, and what it will become—a fruitful field bringing forth nothing but the golden grain."

"I have faith," said Marston, "to believe that it will be so; for God has said that Christ shall reign, but it does need faith to hold this belief. Experience only serves to shake it. At every turn you stumble against some hard fact that weighs in the other balance; but still I do believe it."

At this moment a party of the women, inmates of the Grange, came by, and Lucy joined them, to avoid the little sarcasm which her *tête-à-tête* with the master would give rise to. They passed on. Presently a couple of the men appeared, who nodded, but did not stop; then one of the older hands, named John Dering, made his appearance and joined Marston at the gate.

"There's forty bushels a acre there," said he, "please God, we've weather to gither it!"

Marston did not reply, and presuming his observation was not heard, he repeated it.

"Yes," said Marston; "I heard you; but I was thinking of another harvest, John, when you and I shall be in the place of the grain and the angels the reapers."

"Ah, indeed, that was a good sarmint ye gave us this evenin'; but all the preachin' in the world won't touch the heart of some people, particularly them young maids of ours."

"Do you think not?"

"No, I knows it! there's some half-a-dozen as I med pick out who be pretty middlin' like; but take the rest of the flock, they're like sparrows in spring-time, thinkin' of nothin' but gettin' married."

"Well, John, there is not much harm in young women getting married; indeed nothing gives me greater pleasure than promoting the wishes of young people in this respect."

"Indeed," said John, "I must say, for all you've a long head of your own, you're as innocent as a baby in the ways of people; that ye are."

Marston smiled.

"I hope my innocence proceeds from living among friends whose lives and hearts are open to me."

John jerked his head to express his compassion for Marston's unsuspectingness. "Dear me!" said he, "dear me! You might know better if you was only to open your eyes; but then you locks 'em close and says you can't see."

"I don't understand you."

"Not for me to say so! but then I will say it. The boys and the girls is gettin' too saucy; too much beans and bacon and too little to do. I sin how 'twould be in the haymakin', and everybody but yourself sees it now."

"What d'ye mean, John?"

"Why, Emma, Maria, and Betty Wilkins are going to do the same as their mothers did afore 'em!"

Marston turned pale. "And is this the result of all my care and anxiety? Oh! John Dering, this is a fearful blow!"

"Ah! I know'd you'd feel it! but then the mischief's done, and we can't help it."

"I would have given my right hand to have avoided this disgrace."

"Dear me! dear me! they'll make good honest wives yet. Don't take on so, measter!"

"Hush! John Dering; it is that miserable indifference to shame that is the curse of the people. Have I not inculcated the necessity of self-respect, the priceless value of a blameless life? Have I not taught that in mind, and thought, and feeling there is nothing to prevent every man from being a gentleman and every woman a lady? Have I not impressed upon you that the eyes of all the country are watching you, and now every scoffer's tongue will spread the tale abroad."

Marston hurried home, and shut himself up in his own room. Of all his sorrows and trials nothing had afflicted him like this calamity: it threatened to undermine his system, either by destroying the society altogether, or by rendering it a reproach.

His Association had supplied to him the place of mother, sisters, wife, and children: its success was his triumph, its failure his defeat, and the ruin of his life. To have toiled zealously, and up to a certain period successfully, to have been the butt of scorners,

the object of universal criticism; to have outlived spiteful prophecies begotten of evil wishes, to have watched the decline of carping and listened to the first symptoms of general approval, and then to fail in the very hour of triumph, is one of the severest trials a man can be subjected to.

He had lived for his people; made their hopes his own, their aspirations the desire of his soul. He had acknowledged with a grateful heart the fidelity of their conduct, the quiet heroism (that must be exercised in fighting against circumstance and opinion) which they had so constantly exhibited. At times he infused something of his own ardent nature into their sluggish souls, and gave them glimpses of that nobler life which sacrifices itself for the happiness of others. He had told them that they were a band of missionaries preaching the good news that mutual help was self-help, and that even the peasant might hope to win a valley of rest before he slept in the churchyard.

He knew that many envied them, that many bade them God speed! that a new spirit was stirring in the minds of the people, and that the old race of taskmasters prayed for his downfall.

These were the thoughts that hurried through his brain in the silence and solitude of his room. They made the blood tingle in his veins, and for a time confused his judgment.

What should be the remedy? Should leniency or

severity prevail? The former would serve to stimulate the evil in others; the latter might destroy the victims. At first it seemed to him that they must be punished as traitresses; their sin must be upon their own heads; better that the eye should be plucked out than that the whole body should be damned; better that an individual, or two or three, should suffer rather than the progress of the people should be stayed.

He recognised in sacrifice an eternal law, manifested everywhere throughout the moral and physical universe. The seed dies that the fruit may live; the tree falls that the ship may float; the clouds dissolve that the rain may descend; music dies that other notes may follow; whole creations have perished that nobler might succeed. Men toil that their children may play. Christ was crucified that men might live. Were not some animals saved from the flood that they might perish on the altar afterwards as a sacrifice for all that were preserved from the danger they also escaped?

Then, when these stern reflections had exhausted themselves, came other thoughts, especially the remembrance that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

Marston felt his own judgment unequal to the task, therefore he knelt to ask for that guidance he so sorely needed in this trying hour.

When night closed, and the people assembled for

family prayer, his soul had regained its calmness, though every one remarked "that the master was looking main poorly."

As soon as this duty was over he returned to the privacy of his room, and remained up long after every one had gone to sleep, reflecting on the course he should pursue.

After breakfast he called in to his private room half a dozen of the men, on whose good sense he most relied, and laid the case before them.

Then he found that they had already frequently discussed the question, and were only surprised that Marston had not taken action sooner.

"Two of 'em," said John Dering, "means to be married, I knows; but as for Betty Wilkins, I knows nothing."

After some deliberation it was proposed that these two couples should be dismissed, with a present of ten pounds each to enable them to begin the world. This resolution required the sanction of the general meeting, which was not withheld.

Betty Wilkins's case required more consideration. No husband *in prospectu* appeared, and the girl evidently keenly felt her disgrace, while the other two were perfectly indifferent to their lot. The mother naturally tried to screen her child, but could not but admit the danger of her example. Eventually it was determined that she must leave the Grange, and Marston undertook to get her a situation.

Betty was a proud high-spirited girl, ready with *repartee*, apt to learn, a clever needlewoman, hot tempered, and yet warm-hearted. She had many friends and some enemies; among the former were Lucy and Marston, who regarded her as a special favourite.

When the sentence was communicated to her she burst into a passionate fit of weeping, but subsequently lapsed into a sullen humour.

The thought was intolerable to her, that she should be sent out into the world's wilderness a by-word and a warning to her sex. Yet how could it be otherwise; and even the loneliness of the world would be preferable to enduring the sarcasm of her fellows—experiencing Marston's averted glance, and shunned by the pure, the beautiful, the blameless Lucy.

When a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her—as well may one attempt to wash the stain from sullied snow. Men sin and are forgiven; but the memory of a woman's guilt cannot be removed on earth. Her nature is so exquisitely refined that the slightest flaw becomes a huge defect. Like perfume, it admits of no deterioration, it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sweet. Her soul is an exquisitely precious, a priceless gift, and even more than man's a perilous possession.

Of all the young women at the Grange, except Lucy Lockwood, there was none of whom Marston

was more proud than of this girl. Betty Wilkins had often been held up as an example of industry and ability to her fellows; many consequently envied and disliked her, and all those would glory in her fall. The hapless girl shut herself up in her parent's room and refused to see any one.

Alone she sat brooding over her lot, face to face with blackness and despair. The hot tears trickled through her fingers as she pressed her hands against her face—hot salt tears that blistered as they rolled—tears that intensified her grief, because they sprung from an increasing consciousness of her guilt. No power in earth or heaven could recall her innocence—it had perished absolutely and for ever.

Her folly, her weakness, her crime, as it would be differently called, would be remembered by all who knew her; every shallow soul who could not comprehend the depth and power, the strength and sweetness of her nature, would treasure up the recollection of this fatal error.

Alas! it is one of the terrible effects of sin that it is interwoven with our consciousness, with the unchangeable "I" myself; that personal centre which knows not ebb nor flow, nor waste nor increase, in which identity alone inheres. Therefore as the whole produce of our intellectual being is summed up in memory, perception, and reflection, while these faculties last, that is while our existence continues, the brand of iniquity must remain, even

though the penal consequences be removed. Unless omnipotent love in blotting out our transgressions may also take away the memory of our faults, as men recovering from deadly sicknesses forget all that has happened from the moment of their seizure till the dawn of health returns.

Next to the poor girl herself, Marston felt most acutely her disgrace. He often retired to a shady walk in the garden, and beneath a natural arcade of filbert trees paced to and fro in misery of mind.

Apart from the victim's wretched fate, though this distressed him sorely, was the serious consideration of the effect of her example upon the rest, and upon his scheme of peasant regeneration.

He thought, as the angels might have thought when our first parents were placed in that glorious garden planted by the Lord, "they must be happy here." He, Marston, had provided, as he fancied, for every contingency; especially for early marriages. All improper conversation was forbidden; all obscenity banished. As far as he could insure a pure moral atmosphere at the Grange, nothing had been left undone. Yet he was foiled; defeated where he looked for the most signal triumph. It was a mortifying blow. How the Arlerigge wits would jest. How the "obstructives" would rejoice, and every enemy shout with joy. He worked himself into a frenzy as he pondered on this event, and almost wished he had never left Shale End.

What course should he pursue for the future? should he abandon the Grange in disgust, and let a committee selected by himself carry on the farm?

Then a voice whispered in his ear, "Had your counsel been asked when Adam sinned you would have advised his instant death, and prevented the hierarchies from witnessing that unsurpassable manifestation of sublimity when Christ suffered on the cross."

The individual dies,—the race still lives. The private falls, is trampled under foot,—the army triumphs.

How does the tide of progress roll? Not in one long unbroken wall of water rushing ever forward; but with an indented front, with many a flaw and fissure visible, and many a shattered part.

Must he be disappointed because the devil found an entrance at the Grange, as he does everywhere? Has not the Church itself hundreds of faithless sons? But yet religion lives in spite of them. They are a scandal and a reproach, their treachery wrings many a tender heart, their failings prove the fallibility of every human institution; but they also stimulate the trusty standard-bearers of the cross to lift their banner higher in the van.

At length he paused. "Though fifty scandals rose, and twice fifty girls proved false, the cause shall not be sacrificed. These poor creatures would have been equally prone to mischief in the dirt and wretchedness of their fathers' cottages. I must work on."

At this moment he heard a loud splash in the pond, which lay immediately behind him on the opposite side of the hedge. Scrambling on the bank he saw a woman's dress not quite submerged: he sprang in and quickly succeeded in bringing the drowning girl to the bank.

A glance told him it was Betty Wilkins. Raising her in his arms, he hastened with her to the house.

"Thank God!" he cried, as he felt her heart beat; "I was in time to save her!"

When consciousness returned, she found herself in her mother's bed, and both parents near her.

"Who's at my head?" she asked, as some kind friend smoothed her pillow.

"I'm here," said Lucy, taking the poor girl's hand.

"Thank you! thank you so much! You're so kind."

"You mustn't talk, dear."

The soft sister-like tones of her young companion thrilled through her and echoed in her heart. The thought that she was not cut off from all sympathy and love was as balm to her spirit. The pure and the beautiful could speak kindly to her; the innocent had no reproach to cast at her. She was too weak to cry hysterically, but the tears stood swelling in her eyes; and taking that kind hand that held her own, she tried to carry it to her lips.

Lucy divining her intent stooped down and kissed her.

"Life," thought the poor girl, "was worth returning to, as long as such ministering spirits moved upon the earth."

"You must try and sleep, now," said Lucy, "and I will see you when you awake."

When the medical man arrived he pronounced her state to be most critical. Apart from the chance of fever her nervous system was completely disorganized, and would hardly recover from the shock.

All that kindness could do, was done to save her. Marston often sat by her bed-side, and save that she once asked his pardon, neither of them alluded to the past. Lucy, by turns with her mother, watched her night and day, leaving nothing undone that could cheer and soothe the patient.

"When you get better, Betty dear," her mother would say, "you and father and me will leave the Grange, and we'll have a little place of our own, out somewhere by Nettle Combe. The master says he'll get father a job on the roads, and we shall have enough to buy a cow and a couple o' pigs; and we'll do main well all of us together. Don't you be down-hearted!"

The only answer would be a mournful smile, a shake of the head, followed by "No, no! mother, dear! It's too late now!"

One day she said to Marston, "It's an awful thing to go into the presence of God with all this sin upon me! Oh! where shall I be when I wake!"

"Do you pray, dear?"

"Yes!"

"Fervently—believingly?"

"Yes!"

"Then listen to what the faithful Promiser says. 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' By the infallible Word of God, by the love unchangeable of Christ, you may not only hope, but may enjoy the assurance of acceptance. Fear not; I would that all had your softened heart."

Comforting as were the prayers and ministrations of Marston, thoroughly as she appreciated his untiring care—next, if not almost before, her mother—at least before any other—did she value the love of Lucy Lockwood.

When she held her hand she felt herself again linked to a spotless life, and that she was not severed from that holier, happier existence she once knew. That sense of utter loss and abandonment,—that wretched feeling of worthlessness died out. If Lucy could love her there must be something in her that the good and holy could love. This feeling was the commencement of that spiritual reconciliation with God which she was permitted to experience before death took her.

There were not many dry eyes among the crowd when the poor body was committed to the dust.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the interval between Lord Ravenscroft's visit and the Maddocks's journey to London, one fine morning, Mary, accompanied by the groom, rode over to the Grange; partly to see Lucy, and partly to walk over the farm, now that the harvest was going on. She found her young friend in the house.

"I hope you are not very busy this morning, because I want you to show me the farm."

"I am quite at your service."

"Thanks! It is so good of you to give me a portion of your time. Harriette is busy with upholsterers, and as I hate having workmen about the house, I rode off to see you."

"How kind of you! But who is Harriette, may I ask?"

"Why mamma, to be sure! But then, you know, she is so young and so pretty that it would be absurd to call her anything else. It's so much pleasanter to think she is one's sister. We are such good friends!"

"But is your mamma's name Harriette?"

"She has two names—Harriette Sarah! Why do you ask?"

"Because I fancied I had heard that her name was Sarah."

"I have no sister," continued Mary; "have you?"

"No! I am without relatives in the world!"

This she said innocently, as Marston had contrived to keep her in ignorance of her parentage. She knew a cloud hung over her birth, and though this mystery was a source of secret grief, she endeavoured to put it from her.

"And yet you are in mourning! Oh!" said Mary; "I beg pardon; I did not mean to be inquisitive."

Lucy told her that the mourning was put on for a very dear friend who had been buried last week—a young and tender-hearted girl of her own age who had unexpectedly been taken from them.

"I had not heard that death had called at the Grange," said Mary. "Perhaps even now my visit is barely acceptable."

"No, no! Miss Maddocks; anything but that. I am only too glad to see you!"

"Have you many friends among the daughters of the people at the Grange?"

"I hope they are all my friends: but being placed in authority, I find it necessary to practise a little

reserve ; but then, you know, I have Mr. Marston to associate with, and we have no thoughts secret from each other."

Mary looked archly at her companion, but instantly perceived that the remark was the innocent observation of an unsophisticated nature.

"Then I presume, Mr. Marston has educated you."

"Yes, entirely!"

"Is he very clever?"

"He seems to me to know everything."

"And has he taught you the continental languages?"

"No!"

"Would you like to learn French or German?"

"Very much! But who is to teach me?"

"I will!"

"How very kind; but how can it be accomplished?"

"Oh, you can come over to the Hall for a couple of days a week."

"Oh, I don't think it can be managed. I must not forsake my duties. I must be true to my friend."

"I am sure he would give his permission."

"O yes; I know he would do anything I ask him; but then, it would not be generous of me to trespass on his kindness. After all, I don't think I should care to learn the modern languages. Mr. Marston

doesn't speak them, and I should have no pleasure in a pursuit where he could not follow me. I have plenty to learn in endeavouring to be something like him—to practise that self-sacrifice, that makes me think sometimes he is almost more than human."

"And is he so very good?"

"I have lived with him since I was a child; I have seen him tried a thousand ways. I have known him to lie awake night after night from anxiety, and yet I never knew him to use an angry word."

"How does he control the men, then?"

"He rules by love; and I believe no man ever exercised more complete authority than he does."

This was a new idea to Mary. In common with most people, young and old, she ever associated fear with the idea of authority that maintains obedience. Girl as she was, this notion struck her very forcibly, that a man's personal influence can be exercised through the affections of those he controls; and it raised the desire in her heart to know more of the manner in which this spell is used, and more of the man who used it.

Greatness in the opposite sex has a fascination for women, every manifestation of strength of purpose, every indication of majesty in man, ensures their homage and entralls their imagination.

Lucy almost wondered at the interest her companion seemed to evince in her praises of Marston; although it pleased her to think that he whom she

worshipped could be appreciated by others, just as when we have discovered some beautiful painting we are delighted to find that others support our opinion and concur in ascribing it to a Master.

They had now reached the wheat-field: half was already cut, and was being rapidly bound and stacked in mows.

"See," said Lucy, pointing to some twenty women reaping with the ancient sickle; "the crop is too heavy for the scythes, so the men go on cutting elsewhere, and the women reap this leisurely. Only fancy where we are now standing was a crimson sheet of clover bloom twelve months ago, and now I have heard Mr. Marston say, if the present price of wheat does not fall, this field alone is worth four hundred and fifty pounds; and I may tell you when we came here, it only grew thistles and couch grass."

All this was mere jargon to Mary; but she gathered from it, that Marston's management had been most successful.

"Oh!" continued Lucy, "you have no idea the trouble he has had in combating the prejudices of the people. I have heard them all declare emphatically, that a fallow was indispensable to insure a good crop of wheat. Then he had to show in figures what the cost must be, and what the return might be; but they only scratched their heads, and said, 'they warn't no scholards, but they knew 'twas

no use to farm without fallows.' And how d'ye think he managed them?"

"I've no idea!"

"By letting them have their own way on a small part of the farm, and then comparing the results. They gave in at last; but he never taunted them with their defeat; and I'm sure if he were to tell them, that by sowing nails they would reap ploughshares, they would believe him. Now and then the neighbours take a leaf out of our book; sometimes you'll see a farmer crawl over the hedge and stalk up to the men and ask questions; or they will stroll over the fields and learn for themselves. Not that there is any occasion for proceeding in such a manner, because Mr. Marston is only too happy to tell them anything that will be of service to them. Only they are so conceited, and I must say, so unhandsome, they don't like to appear to want any hints from him. There was a rather amusing proof of this feeling given by a neighbour this spring. We had a piece of winter oats that looked very well till March, when it was attacked by wireworm so vigorously, that all hope of saving the crop was at an end. Accordingly it was resolved to harrow it down preparatory to getting it ready for potatoes. Will Symmons, who lives at the next farm, also had a piece of winter oats doing nicely, but seeing our harrows at work; 'Oh,' thought he, 'Marston's up to some of his clever dodges. I'll do the same!'

Next day he succeeded in rooting up and destroying his field of promising corn. I believe our people will never cease to laugh about it."

Holding up her riding habit, Mary threaded her way among the thickly lying sheaves, until she came up to the mowers. All greeted her respectfully, but not one exhibited that slavish look which ordinary peasants assume in the presence of their superiors. There was an air of manly independence expressed in every face. Light danced in their eyes, smiles lurked in the corners of their mouths. Each one seemed to say, "I am free; the doom of hopeless poverty no longer chills my blood."

"You seem to have an excellent crop," said Mary to the foreman.

"Thanks be to God, Miss, we have!" was the wise answer.

"Four years ago," said Lucy in Mary's ear, as they walked on, "that man was a drunken reprobate and poacher. He was struck down by fever; no medical aid was to be obtained, except the few bottles of medicine sent by the parish doctor, who never saw him. Mr. Marston heard of his case, visited him, prescribed for him, saved him body and soul, and now he's a leading hand."

If the men looked happy, their wives and daughters seemed equally contented. Even in their working clothes they exhibited a degree of neatness very unusual in their class. They exchanged kindly

greetings with their visitor, chatted pleasantly with Lucy, and all the while attended to their work.

At this moment a donkey-cart appeared at the gate, and the cry of "Dinner!" resounded through the field.

"It's only bread and cheese and beer," said Lucy; "but you must have some."

The provisions were drawn beneath the shadow of an ash, when all the people left their work and hurried to this one centre of attraction, exchanging jokes amid peals of laughter as they streamed along.

The beer cask was placed on some sheaves of corn, the clean baskets covered with nice white cloths were unpacked, large pieces of good cheese made their appearance, attended by loaves of bread, piles of biscuit, and little pots of butter. There was butter-milk too for those who preferred it, but the majority chose the home-brewed beer.

The foreman arranged some sheaves beside the hedge, on which Lucy and Mary took their seats; the centre of a joyous crowd.

Perhaps it was the walk, the fresh air, or the novelty, but whatever might have been the cause, Mary's appetite, almost emulated that of her hard-working sisters.

"I never ate such bread and cheese in my life!" was her exclamation.

When at last the most ravenous had finished eating, Mary consulted her watch and took her leave.

When out of hearing, she said, "I cannot tell you how pleased I have been with my visit. I almost envy you your life at the Grange."

"Ah!" replied Lucy, "you have looked on the brightest side of the picture to-day. We have our heartburnings sometimes, in common with other families. In wet weather in the winter it is not always easy to preserve order and find employment for so many women. Some are indolent, and some are silly; some are bad tempered, and others are wilful. I assure you my responsibilities are so heavy at times, that nothing but my regard for my benefactor makes me endure them: though for his sake I would endure anything. Only consider, Miss Madocks, what a task it must have been, to organise such an undisciplined crew as ours was at first. Remember, these men are not servants; and then imagine how the little-minded presumed, how the turbulent sought to bully, and how the timid and the gentle shrunk. I believe no other man in the Queen's dominions could have accomplished what Mr. Marston has done, and he only succeeded by convincing the most sceptical that he had no selfish ends to gain. But he has no thought for himself apart from his Associates; and they all feel it. Does it not strike you as a wonderful achievement, this work of his? I have read most histories, but I know of no one more heroic than himself; so simple-

hearted, so gentle, yet withal so earnest—and so grand, because so self-sacrificing.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mary, thoughtfully.

Lucy would have resumed her panegyric, had she not seen its subject approaching.

Before he came up, Mary turning to her, said, “Will you as a favour tell me what little memento of my visit will be most acceptable to you? I ask you as a friend; don’t refuse me; I am sure you can afford to be generous.”

At first a feeling of pride and independence stirred in Lucy’s heart as Mary spoke. Their eyes met, and then it was impossible to say No!

“I do not remember at this moment that we particularly need anything; but if you must send us something, we should prefer some music.”

“Thanks! Now for yourself!”

“Nothing!”

“Don’t be unkind!”

Lucy paused a moment. “If you would give me your own and your mamma’s pictures, I should be greatly pleased.”

Mary smiled, and said, “With pleasure!”

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Mr. Jones left St. Helen's the morning of his quarrel with Mrs. Maddocks, it occurred to him from his long experience of that lady's character, that if she were not watched she would checkmate him. It therefore became indispensable that her conduct should be under surveillance. Could he have established a creature of his own in the Hall he would have done so; but Parliament having been prorogued, he felt it would be far safer to employ no possible traitor, and therefore he resolved to mount guard himself. While Mrs. Jones lived he could take no active measures to prosecute his suit; but as her death, from the nature of the disease that afflicted her, might take place any day, it was incumbent upon him to warn off trespassers on the Surdon Hall estate.

As he sat alone sipping his coffee one evening, it occurred to him, that his best course would be to make a friend of Arthur Apsly, who was said to be engaged to Miss Maddocks, and as he had not

seen him since he left the 'Thalassa' at Lynmouth, he could with excellent grace call on him, to apologise for his sailors' awkwardness in wrecking his boat.

He rode over early the next morning, and as he entered the precincts of St. Olaff's he met Arthur riding out.

"Good morning! I am on my way to your house, to say how inexpressibly vexed I am at the loss of your sail-boat. Do you know, I only heard of it yesterday, or else I should have seen you on the subject before. An accident of this kind is most annoying, because there seems no way of making reparation. I would gladly pay the value of the craft; but then I know you would reject such an offer."

"Pray, don't allude to it again. You cannot be responsible for the lack of seamanship of your crew. I had almost forgotten the existence of the poor old craft."

Jones here turned his horse's head.

"No, no," said Arthur: "since you have come so far, you must lunch before you return."

"Thanks! No! I never eat lunch. My object was to see you, and we can as well chat on horse-back as in your study."

Accordingly they set off together. After the usual topics of country conversation were exhausted, Jones said, "I have only told you half of my object in calling on you to-day. Having inflicted an injury

on you, I now want you to confer a favour on me."

Arthur stared.

"Come with me to the Lynmouth Regatta in the 'Thalassa.'"

"Thanks; I fear I can't spare time."

"Pray don't make that an excuse; everybody knows you are a man of leisure, and I have no doubt there'll be lots of fun. I'm one of the stewards, there will be two good days' racing, a dinner and a ball one night, and something else the next. I hear the town is very full, and having had a little society for a few days, you will be able to enjoy 'Zimmerman on Solitude' more perfectly when you are recovering from the whirl of excitement."

His manner was so frank, the invitation so cordially given—the prospect of as much dissipation as a clergyman could consistently enjoy, so inviting, that he consented to go.

Mr. Jones was right, it was a very pleasant Regatta. The yachts started, tacked about, turned round buoys, run before the wind, crossed and re-crossed each other, till the unhappy spectators were in a state of complete bewilderment as to what yachts were racing, where they were going, which was winning; in short, they only knew, that a band was playing somewhere, that signal and starting guns were being fired, that sundry cups and money prizes would on some mysterious principle be awarded to certain of the competing vessels; but when a fine

yacht came in first amid the cheers of the crew, and the report of a cannon, and they were assured it was not the winner, but that it was a time race, and she had to give ten minutes to the 'Zephyr' and the 'Zephyr' was only nine minutes and a quarter behind, they relinquished the idea of attempting to account for the anomaly, and believed the prize was awarded as at a donkey-race, to the last past the post, and that everybody steered every other body's yacht.

On board the 'Thalassa' a luncheon was going on all day, and a perennial stream of champagne raised the spirits of the party even a little above concert-pitch.

Then came the public dinner for the gentlemen, with its lukewarm soup, overdone fish, and venison roasted to a cinder, accompanied by the ordinary brandied sherry, the stale jokes, the absurd songs, and the inevitable speeches, in which the British householder delights to exhibit the narrow limits of his vocabulary, and his determination to play the fool when he is provided with an opportunity.

"If you're going to the ball, Apsly, let us adjourn to the yacht; the night air, a wash, and some tea will be of service to both of us."

As soon as Arthur got on board the yacht, after dancing till daybreak, he turned in, and did not stir until a sudden lurch of the schooner nearly rolled him on the floor.

"What are we under weigh for, I wonder?"

A voice now shouted through the skylight—"The first race is off, and we are going round the course with them."

Dressing with all speed he ran on deck, and found the yacht staggering under a press of canvas, that every now and then pressed her down till the blue water stood upon the covering-boards.

"The breeze was too tempting to remain at anchor; and I wanted to see what the old schooner would do against those racing-machines to leeward there."

It was blowing half a gale from the sou'-west; large Atlantic billows were rolling in, curled with creamy crests.

"It's just the breeze she likes," said the man at the helm.

The race was round a rocky islet, some six miles off, thence round the Black Rock light-ship, and home. The tide was setting out, and the yachts could all lay the course, with a point or two to spare. Nothing could be more favourable for a schooner: every sail drew, and the 'Thalassa' soon shewed her heels to the cutters.

"Steward!" said Jones. "Hock and Seltzer-water for Mr. Apsly."

Arthur smiled and accepted the preparation.

"Bring up some sandwiches and biscuits! It's no use to think of coffee now—time enough when we come back."

Before this extempore breakfast was finished, the rock was past: then came a dead beat to windward of eight miles, with a freshening gale and rising sea. All the yachts were a long way astern, except a fine cutter of seventy tons, which seemed to sail right in the wind's eye. Her large mainsail pressed her up at least a point and a half closer to the wind than the schooner; but she didn't go so fast through the water.

"She stands up well under her canvas," said Arthur.

"I expect she has shifting-ballast," said Jones.

"I thought it was prohibited?"

"Of course it is."

"How ungenerous he is!" thought Arthur. "He can't let an adversary beat him without imputing unfair play." Arthur did not remember that a yachting man's love for his craft renders him jealous of her reputation, once it is established, and suspicious of all rivals.

The spray came splashing over the bows, and Jones ordered a coat for his friend, though he himself refused to put anything over his "jersey," which he wore in common with his men. Excitement more than supplied the place of a pea-jacket.

It was evident, before they had made a couple of tacks, that the cutter was gaining on them, although, at the same time, she was cracking on too much.

"What an ass the fellow is!" said Jones. "We're

not in the race ; and, in trying to take the shine out of us, he is risking his spars, when he might make the cup a certainty. None of the rest have any chance with him ; and yet he carries on in this insane manner ! ”

“ Would it not be gracious,” said Arthur, “ if we tacked and ran home ? ”

“ No, no, sir ! If he will measure himself by the ‘ Thalassa,’ the consequences rest with him : we are not interfering with his race.”

Still the breeze freshened, still the sea rose higher, but the schooner seemed to bound as if she were a living thing conscious of the effort she was making.

“ Only four hands beside the man at the helm,” said Arthur, looking at the quartett of sailors.

“ Quite enough ! ” said Jones. “ These are men—besides I count for one, and the steward for another.”

“ They are sturdy-looking fellows,” said Arthur ; “ and are less like fine-weather sailors than any yacht’s crew I have ever seen.”

Jones smiled grimly.

“ They look like men accustomed to rough weather : they move about quickly, but withal composedly.”

“ Talk to them,” said Jones, “ and they’ll tell you this breeze is nothing but a tempest in a tea-cup.”

“ Thank you,” said Arthur—“ sitting is far safer than walking on a deck inclined at 40 degrees. I’ll take your word for the character you give your crew. By the way, have you ever seen much rough weather afloat ? ”

"I have been 'lying-to' in the Bay of Biscay, in this craft, for six days on a stretch."

"Coming from the Mediterranean, I suppose?"

"Not then; I was returning from Bayonne in the autumn, during the equinoctial gales. There was a large barque also lying-to, only a few miles from us. Just at dawn, on the morning of the sixth day, that fellow at the helm said to me—'The gale's broke, sir. I think we might wear, and run for it.' 'Too much sea on, isn't there?' said I. It was literally running mountains high. 'The old lass, sir (that's the name my men give her), ain't like one of your sand-barges, that'll take a week to come about.' 'Make sail, then,' said I. We put the canvas on her: she began to pay off, when a wave came that I thought must finish us; luckily, it broke short, and smothered us in foam: in another instant we were dancing before the storm. The barque, seeing our manœuvres, tried to imitate us: as we sank in the trough of the sea, we saw her; when we rose to the top of the next wave, she was no longer above the water."

"Listening to you," said Arthur, "I could almost fancy you had been a sailor from a boy."

Jones laughed. "I am very fond of a seafaring life, and I hope yet to escape from the effete civilization of Europe to a new career on the other side of the world. I am tired of running up and down in the grooves in which we all move. Ambition has

no prizes to tempt me now, short of the highest offices of state; and they are too jealously guarded to render it worth while to force the passage. I thirst to feast on the glories of the Eastern Archipelago. We talk of Greece, rant about Italy, simper over the charms of classic lands. I have exhausted them already in only travelling over them twice. I do not say that others cannot find objects to admire where men have trod before them; but I would rather five years of the perils and beauties of the untamed wilderness than half a century of palaces and cities, parks and parterres."

Just at this moment the 'Thalassa' buried herself to the foremast in blue water, drenching every one on deck.

"Ease her at it, Ben! Ease her at it!" cried Jones to the man at the helm. "George! fasten down the skylights, and shut the companion!"

Arthur shook himself and shivered.

"You're cold?" said Jones. "George, tell the steward to bring up some brandy and biscuits."

"Not for me!" said Arthur.

"Yes, for you! you need it, unless you choose to go below."

"Ready about there!" shouted Ben.

Round came the schooner on the other tack, and not more than a hundred yards to leeward followed the cutter.

"There!" said Jones, with an air of triumph,

pointing to a row of heads on the weather side, some twenty in number—"there's the shifting-ballast I told you of. He can't keep 'em under cover, I suspect; serve him right for loading his craft with long-shore lubbers; they won't submit to be drowned below deck. He had only six or eight hands in sight when he started. He's a plucky fellow, though, on my word. I say, Ben, the water must be up to his combings."

Ben's eyes were at that moment glancing at their own spars. The topmasts and bowsprit were bending like whips.

"Will the sticks stand, sir?" said Ben.

"They can but break!" was the answer.

Both vessels divided the water like knives. It flew off in a curved sheet from the bows of each craft, and what they took on board came in abaft the mast in the cutter, and just before the mainmast in the schooner.

"Oh, for more wind!" cried Jones. "We're not in trim for fine weather racing."

"Don't be in a hurry," said Ben—"you'll have it presently; the gulls are coming in-shore, and they knows how many puffs goes to make a whole gale."

The light-ship was close a-head; she had to be passed to leeward, or, as the sailing directions for the race expressed it, left on the starboard hand.

She was anchored near a sunken rock, that stood out half-a-mile from a cluster of its fellows, which,

however, had sufficient honesty to show their heads above water. Between them was a deep channel, frequently used by coasters, but always avoided by large vessels, through which the competing yachts had to pass. The wind setting against the tide caused a nasty short sea, and the whole channel was covered with foam.

Both yachts tacked together, the cutter behind in line, but nearly as far to windward as the schooner.

"By Jove, Ben! she'll weather us this tack."

The sailor's eye was to windward.

"Down with the 'gaff topsails!" he shouted in a voice that made every one jump. "Look alive, men!"

Jones's first impulse was to countermand the order. It mortified his vanity that the 'Thalassa' should be the first to take in sail. But, looking in the direction of Ben's gaze, he saw all the sea was creaming with foam, as the storm hurried along.

With marvellous celerity, the great gaff-topsails were hauled on deck, Jones himself assisting.

"Stand by the main and fore-sheets! Pay out!"

Down came the squall, the schooner heeled over gracefully, and then, as if measuring the strength of the wind, lifted herself triumphantly.

"Hand the fore-sail!" Down it came.

"In with the jib!" It fluttered on the deck.

"Out with number three!"

Where was the cutter? Dismasted!

"I thought as much," said Ben, shaking his head at the wreck.

"We must take her in tow," said Jones.

As soon as the third jib was in its place, a large hawser was brought on deck, and a smaller line bent on to the end of it.

The schooner rounded the light-ship, tacked, and bore down for her late rival. A sailor took the coil of the line in hand, and stood in the lee scuppers. As the 'Thalassa' approached, an inexperienced eye might have imagined that a collision was inevitable; but Ben knew that his craft would answer her helm like a jolly-boat; and, luffing up in time to diminish her speed, she glided past, and almost touched the cutter's quarter. The coil of rope whizzed in the air, was caught, the end of the hawser hauled in, made fast, and the schooner, with her late rival in tow, ran back for the harbour.

In an hour the yachts were in the basin, and immediately afterwards Jones, Arthur, and Mr. Grantham, of the cutter, sat down to dinner; the latter having come on board to return thanks for the assistance so ably rendered, and to distribute a *douceur* among the crew, was induced to accept his salvor's hospitality.

About five o'clock he took his leave, to go in search of letters, which he was reminded of by seeing the steward hand several to his master.

One of these missives caused the wrinkles to gather

on Jones's face. He folded it up, put it in his pocket, and turning to his guest, said—"Have you any relatives in London named Prosser?"

"Yes—a cousin."

"Do you expect her to stay at St. Olaff's?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"It seems one day last week, an elderly person called at my slate-wharf to inquire if her mistress might send down certain packages by one of the coasters to St. Olaff's. The master proved unaccommodating, and the woman left. It occurred to me that your relative might feel annoyed, and therefore I mention the matter to you; and I can only say, if she will send any parcels or boxes to the office directed to you, they shall be forwarded at an early opportunity."

"Thanks! But I fancy it must be some mistake—at least so far as my cousin is concerned. We very rarely correspond; I never hear from her; and perhaps twice a-year she favours my father with a letter."

"What is your cousin's personal appearance?"

"Fair—very fair; and, if the truth must be told, decidedly plain."

"Would she be likely to call in person to make inquiries at the wharf?"

"I imagine not."

"Do you know if she has an elderly woman in her service?"

"Yes, her old nurse."

"Then, probably, it was her."

"I still think not. However, had she any intention of this kind, she would have written to my father ere this. If you wish, I will ask him if he has heard from my cousin lately. I am tolerably certain, though, up to the time of my leaving home, he had received no communication from her since last spring."

"I confess my curiosity is excited, and I should be glad to unravel this little mystery."

The Member for Arlerigge was in a very absent mood for the rest of that evening. The post had brought him intelligence that preoccupied his mind, and almost made his guest repent he had accepted his invitation to return home with him. "How strange it is," said Arthur to himself, "that men do not put off the responsibilities of business as soon as they have earned a decent competence." Presently, however, the cloud cleared off, and Jones and his friend went ashore to billiards. For the next two days they cruised in the channel, then landed at Sandcombe, and drove to Howden Park.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. MADDOCKS and Mary grew tired of London in less than a fortnight. Lord Ravenscroft had been summoned home. The streets were hot; the theatres were stupid. They would return to Arcady. The ensuing night they slept at Surdon Hall.

Some days elapsed, and no intelligence arrived from her solicitor, whereupon Mrs. Maddocks wrote to him, and received by return of post the following answer:—

“London, August —, 18—.

“DEAR MADAM,

“Even if I had not received your letter of yesterday’s date I had resolved to acquaint you by this post with the result of my proceedings.

“My first step was to engage the services of Inspector Roberts, one of the most experienced detectives in London, to whom I communicated (reserving your name) the nature and grounds of your suspicions. He commenced his inquiries the day after you left London by making himself acquainted with the person and habits of Mr. Ranger, the manager of the slate-wharf.

“He found that he drove a large four-wheel dog-cart twice a-day to the wharf. Ascertaining his hours, he followed him to a house in Bond Street, two doors from a large wholesale tobacco-shop, ostensibly managed by one Charles Duprès. Engaging lodgings opposite, he watched the establishment for some days;

but nothing more remarkable occurred than the arrival and departure, twice daily, of Mr. Ranger in his dog-cart. On the night of the fourth day, just as the shop was being closed, Roberts believed he saw this same individual coming out of a door behind the counter. If this was so he concluded there must be some internal communication between Ranger's house and Duprès' premises; and he has been strengthened in this opinion since he has ascertained that the intermediate house is also occupied by the tobaccoist.

"On consulting together we deemed it advisable to purchase a bargeload of slates, which we conveyed to Gravesend, and sold without loss. (During their shipment Roberts was constantly at the yard, and observed that the dog-cart was always placed in a coach-house at the back of the office, and the door carefully locked. This practice was never omitted, and suggested the idea that if any smuggling is perpetrated Mr. Ranger is his own carrier. During the period occupied by the loading and despatching the barge, no vessel with cargo arrived at the yard-wharf; but before the week elapsed the 'Dreadnought' of Lynmouth, a small vessel of eighty tons, arrived. Roberts engaged a wager-boat, and rowed backwards and forwards by the wharf for two days, but observed nothing of a suspicious character, although his watch was continued through the night as well; but (and I agree with him) he is of opinion that, except on rare occasions, such as very foggy or stormy nights, no goods are landed after dark, it being always safer to work boldly in the day-time.

"Inquiring at the Custom-house, Roberts found that the 'Dreadnought' cleared out for Sandcombe, which I understand is the little port near where the slates are shipped.

"Of course it would be very easy to persuade the Custom-house authorities to board any or all of these vessels, but should their search be a failure your plans would be defeated.

"I should state for your information, that, judging from the great demand for Mr. Jones's slates, the quarries must be very profitable. Such being the case, it is rather improbable that he would engage in the perilous profession of smuggling.

"I have the honour to remain,

"Your obedient servant,

"To Mrs. Maddocks."

"JOHN LIPSCOMBE."

To this letter Mrs. Maddocks replied that she was still convinced of the truth of her suspicions; and even if the quarries were a profitable concern, the revenue from them would not be equal to the proceeds of successful smuggling, for which Mr. Jones had many rare advantages.

Sandcombe was on a wild part of the coast, remote from much observation. The coast-guard were a very inefficient body of men; and even assuming their integrity, it would be impossible for them to watch at all times every coaster that arrived and sailed from Sandcombe. Then Mr. Jones's position would place him above suspicion; and, as he was far too cunning to adopt the old plan of employing rakish craft, she felt assured that perseverance in the path she had indicated must lead to ultimate success.

To this letter Mr. Lipscombe replied that no fresh facts had been gleaned, and therefore he suggested that Roberts should come down to Arcady, and in the character of a geologist obtain admission to the quarries. At present he saw no chance of getting into the coach-house; and, until that was done, nothing could be gained by making a seizure on board any of the vessels which might come to the wharf, or even (say it were possible) at Duprès', because in either case Jones's connection with the vessel or ship would be incapable of proof. The coasters would appear to be the property of the masters, and the shop would of course belong to Duprès.

"Since writing the above Roberts has come in, and informs me that during a block on London Bridge, when following Ranger, he was able to strike a blow on the body of the cart, which sounded so hollow that he was convinced it was empty. As a set-off to this little disappointment, he has ascertained that Ranger keeps no groom at the stables in Bond Street; and that his housekeeper is an old ill-fared person, not amenable to the attentions of a sweetheart, and therefore hopeless as a source of information. At Duprès', the women who serve in the shop are all turned out at ten o'clock. It is therefore evident that this caution points to some special necessity, and Roberts thinks that a search in the coach-house would certainly prove successful. There is, however, this objection to be considered. If a seizure of contraband goods were made at the wharf, Jones would assert his complete ignorance of the traffic. Ranger would, for a pecuniary consideration, take upon himself the responsibility; and although their trade would be ruined the chief of the gang would escape with impunity. Unless I hear to the contrary, Roberts shall leave for your neighbourhood on the third day from this. You will find him a gentlemanly and an intelligent person, and you may rely on his integrity.

"I have the honour to be."

It was a fine Monday morning, when the landlady of the principal tavern at the little village of Sandcombe, was startled at the apparition in her sanded parlour of a gentleman wanting accommodation for a few days.

Indeed, she didn't know, she couldn't tell whether he could have a bed or not.

To which the stranger replied, that, if she couldn't give him a decided answer, he would, with her permission, explore the house and decide for himself if there was any suitable room in it.

The stranger was a middle-aged gentleman, with spectacles and grey hair, dressed in a complete suit of check-flannel. His appearance was in no way remarkable; of the ordinary height, strongly-made, he had a sanguine complexion and homely features, possessing withal a pleasant, merry expression.

Mrs. Williams looked at him.

"My name," he said, "is Wilkins. I'm a geologist."

"A what, sir?"

"A very queer animal. I work by night and sleep by day, and walk as easily on my hands as on my heels."

Mrs. Williams opened both mouth and eyes.

"Ah! I dare say you never saw one of my family before. We are very fond of the water, swim like ducks, and are capital hands at lobster-fishing; we live in-land, until all the sea-birds are hatched, and then we take our turn by the sea-side. Easy to please: we don't mind rough sheets or hard beds. We can eat fresh eggs and nice bacon for breakfast, and can dine off fowls and green geese seven days in the week, if the potatoes are well done; and if our landladies think we are queer fish, to prove we are not scaly, we are ready to pay for a week's board and lodging in advance."

Mr. Wilkins concluded this speech by laying down two sovereigns on the round mahogany table that stood in the bay-window.

Utterly mystified by his absurdity, but mollified by the appearance of money, Mrs. Williams commenced to have golden opinions of her guest, and, curtsying, said there were two bad paymasters—one who paid beforehand, and the other who never paid at all; but, as she knew she was speaking to a gentleman, she would trust to his honour, and try to make him comfortable.

“Then, Mrs. Williams, if you will cut short in the embryonic state four chickens, by denuding them of their calcareous covering, previous to consigning them to a boiling-watery grave—in other words, if you will poach me four eggs, and serve them with a rasher of bacon as a sort of tribute to their possible virtues, and add to the repast bread, butter, and a quart of good ale, in the shortest possible time, I shall be exceedingly obliged to you.”

“Potched eggs and bacon, sir, and some bre’n cheese?”

“Exactly so, Mrs. Williams. I perceive you have shrewdness, and great aptitude for acquiring new ideas. I trust that a good memory is also another of your faculties?”

Mrs. Williams stared again.

“Eggs and bacon, ma’am, quick!” said the geologist.

Mrs. Williams bustled out to the kitchen, sent the servant to the nests for the freshest eggs, and, with her own hands, made a terrible gash in a two-year-old

flitch of bacon, amber-coloured within and without. A neighbour dropping in at this moment was informed that there was a new kind of preacher in the parlour; "the like she (Mrs. Williams) never see'd" before: he had stood talking for an hour to her in the beautifullest English as ever was heard, and she couldn't understand as much as a word he said, and she didn't think as there was anybody in the rounds as could understand him either—"no, not even Mr. Lloyd, the tailor; or the Squire, for the matter o' that."

Long before Mr. Wilkins (alias Roberts) had finished his repast, every housekeeper in Sandcombe was loitering at the threshold of her own or some neighbour's door, in the expectation of seeing the prodigy pass.

When the celebrity did make his appearance about three o'clock, with a clay-pipe in his mouth, all the pious feelings of the matrons were so outraged that they could scarcely forbear hissing him. True it was that their own preachers smoked and drank gin-and-water; but then they indulged themselves in the retirement of back parlours, sacred to the Eleusinian mysteries. But of all the ministers ever seen none defiled themselves with tobacco in the streets in day time.

Conscious of their inquisitiveness, but unconscious of their animadversions, Roberts walked on, endeavouring to wink at every pretty girl through his spectacles, until he reached the beach, and got into

conversation with some superannuated fishermen, who were waiting the return of the boats from "lobstering."

After making arrangements for a fishing excursion on the morrow, he continued his walk along the beach, until a comfortable seat appearing on a ledge of rock, he accepted the hint and sat down.

After refilling his pipe he pulled a thick book out of his pocket, laid aside his spectacles, and commenced reading.

"When the productions of the sarcode are numerous, filiform, and seemingly constant, radiating from all parts of the body, the rhizopod presents the characters of *Actinophrys*. When the tentacles are produced from only one extremity of the body we have the genus *Pamphagus*. When such a rhizopod is enclosed in a membranous sac it is a *Diffugia*; if the sac be discoid, with a split on the flat surface for the protrusion of the tentacles, it is an *Arcella*."

Roberts laid down the book and soliloquised. "Of all the tasks I have ever undertaken, this getting up of Geology in a week is the least promising. If I'm left alone there will be no difficulty; but if I should fall across any one acquainted with the science, saints and angels defend me! Let me consider. These slate quarries are among the lowest stratified rocks, and the fossils are (turning to his book) chiefly *Grap-to-li-ti-dæ*, or *Graptolites*. Ah, yes, that's the name of the family; now for their

Christian names. There's Master Diplograpsus and Miss Didymograpsus, besides several other young ladies and gentlemen whose acquaintance I cannot hope to make. Upon my honour it's awfully puzzling; about the best thing I could do would be to deliver a lecture to-night at the public."

Resuming his spectacles, he shut up his book, and remained watching the flood-tide for an hour, until its close proximity to his feet and the edge of the cliff warned him to return at once.

In the evening he visited the parlour where he had dined; but which was now occupied by the principal village respectabilities, who had assembled in greater numbers than usual in expectation of meeting the new comer.

Before Mr. Wilkins entered the room the philologists of Sandcombe were engaged in fixing a meaning to the word geologist amidst a variety of opinions. The hostess's first announcement that he was a preacher had predisposed the minds of the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" to incline to this interpretation. But when Mr. Lloyd, the tailor, declared that the word signified a new kind of water doctor, public opinion veered round with his assertion. The debate was at its height when *the* Mr. Wilkins opened the door, and every one in the room tried to look as if he hadn't been speaking of the new arrival; in which attempt no one met with success.

Mr. Lloyd, who occupied the seat of honour, *i.e.*

the armchair near the fireplace, instantly offered his seat, an act of courtesy firmly but politely declined by the new comer.

After an awkward silence, the tailor, looking pointedly at the stranger, said, "From London, I suppose, sir?"

"Don't be critical, sir," replied Wilkins; "they're only a ready-made suit."

A small guffaw greeted this repartee.

"I ax y'r pardon, sir; I meant yourself."

"Sir, I have the honour to inform you that geologists are not confined to London. In the country, sir, we pursue our studies, and try to benefit our fellow-men."

"Have you many patients, sir?"

"I leave you to judge. In this county I have attended the family of the Belodons, the family of the Arthrasters, and Mrs. Anomia, within the last three days. Then there are all the Protozoic people, among whom are your neighbours the Graptolites."

"I never heerd of 'em before, sir. Where do they live?"

"That's exactly what I want to know. Can't you tell me? No, I suppose you can't, because I fancy you don't speak Greek, and we in our profession get so much in the habit of talking in the language of science, that we forget now and then that everybody isn't a Greek scholar; but you will excuse me, the

members of your craft, Mr. Lloyd—your name is Lloyd ——?”

“Yes, sir.”

“The members of your craft are becoming so learned that they called their shirts *Eureka*, which being interpreted means, ‘fast colours warranted to wash out,’ or as another scholar puts it (because the word has two meanings, like cabbage a vegetable, or cabbage a professional privilege), ‘guaranteed to fit any size.’ But, gentlemen, as Mr. Lloyd very justly observed, talking is dry work, and with the permission of the chair, I’ll order glasses round.”

Here Wilkins hurt his knuckles by rapping the table; and the gentleman nearest the door opened it, and shouted, “*Missus*.”

Lloyd made one or two more ineffectual attempts to gain a knowledge of Wilkins’s antecedents, and then asked him bluntly if he were a water doctor.

“Ah,” said the latter, “you’re a clever fellow. I know you’re so sharp that you could sew on a button with your fingers; but the fact is, I’ve left my medicines behind me. I want rest, and if I can pick up a few herbs and what not about the rocks, well, why shouldn’t I? But mind now I tell you, and I tell everybody else, don’t bring me any of your sick people, because I won’t cure ’em. I’m out for a holiday, and no more business at present for yours obediently, Alphonso Laffarge.”

Wilkins had lived sufficiently long in the world to

know that the quiet assumption of knowledge is more imposing on the minds of the vulgar than the outspoken assertion of superior wisdom; and, although when he entered the room he had no notion of playing the part of a quack, yet he was too shrewd not to perceive that such a character might serve his ends if other means failed.

Before anything could occur to damage the favourable impression he had made on the minds of the Sandcombites he retired to his room to have another grind at his Protozoic foes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day Wilkins started, after an early breakfast, to set lobster-pots ; and, rowing some distance northwards, they came in sight of Mr. Jones's Slate Quarry.

Wilkins proposed they should commence their fishing operations near where the slates were being shipped ; but his companions told him it was poor feeding ground ; but they could row over there while they were waiting to make a haul.

This was all that Wilkins cared for ; he only wanted to approach the place by water so as to master its topography.

Many years have passed since the day when the ex-preacher entered on his new calling ; and the time had not been idly spent. A rude pier had been built, which gave protection to the regular traders from the only dangerous wind. Vast heaps of rubbish had been shot into the sea, long galleries had been cut in the rock which circled round an ever-growing amphitheatre.

"I suppose one may go on shore?"

"La, bless you, to be sure!"

The boat soon skimmed into the little harbour, and Wilkins scrambled up the pier, followed by one of the fishermen who acted as guide.

Tramways for the conveyance of the slates were laid out on the wharf, and ran back into the quarry. They advanced along the centre line, and at the entrance of the excavation stood a little cottage, and on the same level was a strong door set in the face of the cliff.

"That's Cap'n Gally's house when he's ashore."

"Who's Captain Gally?"

"Mr. Jones's right-hand man, and some ses he's a partner. But anyhow he's a rum un."

"What's his amusement?"

"Oh, sometimes he takes and sails one of the smacks with a cargo of slates, and sometimes he's aboard the yacht, and sometimes he's ashore, sweerin' at the men all day long in French. He's the toptest devil to sweer as ever I come across. Some o' them oaths o' his is enough to blow his teeth out; but then what does it matter, them furreners is no better than dogs when they be dead. So I've heard 'em say."

"And what's that door in the rock?"

"Oh, that's the powder room; and a precious lot they do use, I can tell you. They're blowin' off great shots all day long."

"Ah!" thought Wilkins, "I have learnt enough for to-day. Now, my hearty, let's see what sort of luck we've got in the pots."

"This is another link," thought Wilkins. "Gally boards Mr. Apsly's boat. Gally doesn't want any nocturnal witnesses, therefore he wrecks the little craft. Gally pilots slates to London. Gally assumes authority at the quarry. Gally sleeps beside the magazine, and now there is no ship in port Gally is not here, and the powder takes care of itself. Moreover, Gally is a Frenchman, Duprès is another; surely this alliance is not fortuitous? But at present I can't see through this stone wall."

Sandcombe was only six miles from the Quarry, therefore it was an easy task for Wilkins next day, armed with a hammer and leather bag, to stroll over and ask permission to search for geological specimens. His appearance excited no suspicion, and the foreman readily accorded him leave to "gether up as much rubbitch" as he could carry away.

With the air of a *savant* he spent some hours in exploring the excavations and refuse piles, at no farther cost than that of distributing money for beer among the more importunate of the workmen. There was no trace of any place of concealment except the magazine; but this he discovered was secured with double locks. First a mortice lock, and then a bar secured by a padlock over the keyhole of the latter. Was it possible to pick those locks and enter that

storeroom? If it was to be done the attempt must be made when there were no vessels at the pier. But before anything could be effected it was indispensable that he should familiarize himself with the approaches to this subterranean chamber, to enable him to find it in the dark. For the rest of that visit he occupied himself in making rough measurements by paces, and noting down the result in his pocket-book, together with a tolerably accurate ground-plan of the quarry. On the next day he corrected and verified these observations, and resolved that night to try a selection of skeleton-keys in the locks of the magazine.

He could not conceal from himself the peril of the enterprise. If caught might not his life pay forfeit for his temerity; or, in event of milder issues, he would be brought before Jones as a magistrate and committed for felony. In the mean time the accomplices would have ample opportunity to remove all traces of their contraband traffic.

Having informed his landlady that he might spend the night in Arlerigge, he guarded against any suspicion being excited by his absence. He had provided himself with luncheon before he started; but the hours hung so heavily on hand that he was glad to take refuge in a farmhouse, and induce the farmer's wife to prepare some supper for him.

At length night came — a clear bright starlit night—as he started out for the scene of his labours.

It was nearly midnight when he reached the cliffs; everything was perfectly still except the gentle splashing of the sea on the rocks.

He had noticed that a large post marked the commencement of the road that led down to the pier. This he found without difficulty, and commenced the descent. On his left hand rose a wall of rock, on the right was a precipice unprotected by any fence. It was necessary to proceed slowly: the light was deceptive; an accident might easily happen. It is much more difficult to descend than to ascend a path at night. Going down, the ground recedes from the sight and becomes lost in gloom, while the eyes, fixed on the darkness, often grow misty from the excessive effort of attempting to pierce the deep shadow.

Wilkins paused often, both to listen and to assure himself of the path. To a nervous temperament the silence would have been painful; an imaginative person would have experienced a sense of awe in walking alone where lately so many scores of men were actively at work. Almost any one revisiting alone in the deep stillness of night a scene where men are constantly employed, must feel at first the contrast strike him forcibly; for the mind inevitably associates the idea of death with solitude, darkness, and silence following the busy workday life. But Wilkins thought only of his task, and was experimentally unconscious of nervous feeling.

At length he reached the bottom, and stood upon the tramway just where it branched off to the magazine. Walking carefully on the metal to avoid making tracks in the soft mud, he suddenly heard the sound of footsteps. Getting as close to the rock as possible, he crouched down where the shadow was deepest. The footsteps drew nearer; he grasped his life preserver, and confessed to himself that he experienced a slightly accelerated pulsation of the heart. The light of a lantern flashed along the rails that ran out to the pier at right angles to the place in which he stood. A moment more and two men passed out to the wharf: the light gleamed in his eyes; he felt he was visible, but evidently he was not discovered.

The footsteps receded, and then ceased. It was time to escape at once. Stealthily, yet rapidly, he retreated, gained the ascent, and soon reached the top.

Clambering over a fence that interposed between him and the sea, he walked onwards until he arrived at the edge of the cliff that overlooked the harbour. The light was now stationary at the end of the pier; evidently some vessel was expected to arrive. After waiting an hour his conjectures were verified, and the splash of oars at long intervals told him that a craft was being brought into the wharf. He could hear the voices of the men; presently the mast of the vessel loomed out, but the water was so phospho-

rescent that every dip of the oars disturbed a sea of light. The vessel came on, was brought alongside the pier and made fast. The light was carried in, and in a short time all was still.

Now, thought Wilkins, they will begin to unload if there is anything on board of her. He watched all night till dawn ; and then, for fear of discovery, he strolled away beside the cliffs in the direction of Sandcombe. After walking a couple of miles among some boulders and heather, he noticed a large stone, one end resting on the ground, the other on a huge block, the space beneath overgrown with heather. Here he lay down and slept soundly till nine o'clock ; then awaking he found his way to the shore, bathed, ate the last remnant of his sandwiches, and returned in an hour to the quarry to renew his scientific labours. Passing immediately above the door of the powder-room he observed that there were no fresh footsteps near it. Shortly after this he fell in with the foreman, and learnt from him that the vessel was the 'Hawk,' one of the regular traders, and that she would sail for London at high water, at or about three o'clock. He accompanied his informant to the wharf and saw the master, a red-faced, honest-looking seaman.

Captain Gally had not yet arrived.

"Were any more vessels expected soon?"

"We never knows; they'r always coming and going all the summer long."

When three o'clock came the 'Hawk' hauled off and set sail immediately. Nothing more could be done that day, so he returned to Sandcombe and wrote to Mrs. Maddocks, detailing the foregoing circumstances, concluding his letter with the old burden, that while it was quite possible to attempt a seizure, it was not certain that Mr. Jones would be criminated, though the strongest suspicion might attach to him; to make success certain, documentary evidence should be obtained. Did Mrs. Maddocks know any person who for a consideration would get hold of Mr. Jones's private memorandum-book, or would Mrs. Maddocks be content to lay the facts as they now stood before the authorities?

Mrs. Maddocks replied by appointing a meeting at Bunbury, a little town in the next county, —. But before he received this answer, he again visited the quarry with his hammer and bag.

No vessel was at the pier. There were plenty of traces of footsteps to and from the magazine; therefore it had been opened in his absence, and was used for some *bonâ-fide* purpose, although perhaps not entirely so. While he was pondering this question in his mind two gentlemen approached. Wilkins advanced to meet them, raised his hat, and said, he presumed he was addressing Mr. Jones, and hoped he would not consider him a trespasser.

Mr. Jones bowed, smiled, and said, nothing pleased him more than to promote the interests of science.

He only wished he had leisure for scientific study; but, unhappily, his knowledge of geology was of the most empirical kind, and his numerous engagements were so pressing, he must leave to others the unravelling of those fascinating problems in which this science abounded. "But though I am myself such a wretched sciolist in this matter, I am happy to have it in my power to introduce to you my friend Mr. Apsly, who bids fair to rival Buckland."

Wilkins inwardly trembled; but assuming a pleased expression, he said: "He was very happy to know Mr. Apsly; but he regretted that that gentleman would only find in him an amateur." Arthur followed in the same self-depreciatory vein, which made his hearer still more nervous. In reply to a question, he said he had unhappily found no specimens of fossils, although he had searched for several days; he had understood that the rock abounded in rhizopods, and expected to obtain many representatives of the genus *Amoeba* and *Arcella*.

"It is very possible that there are crowds of them round you."

"Indeed! I—I— don't see any of them!"

"Nor will you without a microscopic eye!"

Wilkins looked confused and laughed; but Jones, who watched him closely, at once perceived that the stranger had made a *faux-pas*. Arthur covered his discomfiture good-naturedly by saying, "If you would like one or two specimens of nummulites, I have

some rather fine ones, at least two inches in diameter, which are heartily at your service, if you will tell me where to send them."

"Thanks; my name is Wilkins; at present I am staying at the 'Jolly Sailor,' at Sandcombe."

Jones now came forward, "If you would like to see some specimens of our manufacture, I should be happy to show you what pretty things we can turn out of slate."

Wilkins signified his assent and followed his guide, who took the direction of the pier, and then, to his surprise, sent for the foreman, and desired him to unlock the door of the magazine.

This chamber, partly natural but subsequently enlarged, was of considerable size, and contained piled up tier upon tier some hundreds of large boxes or packing-cases. On the ground, among a litter of straw, were scores of chimney-pieces, slabs for tables, for monumental tablets, brackets, inkstands, ornamental plates and baskets, billiard tables, window-sills, cisterns, &c., &c. "I flatter myself," said Jones, with an air of triumph, "that these productions are rather creditable to Arcady."

Wilkins expressed his astonishment and admiration in warm terms. The contents of this chamber were all evidences of a *bonâ-fide* traffic; but there was another door beyond.

Jones, who seemed to notice every look of the stranger, ordered a light to be brought; and as soon

as a man appeared with a lantern, he took it from him, and desired him to open the door of the magazine.

"Would you like to look at our powder-room, Mr. Wilkins?"

The latter immediately followed his guide, and going in, found the apartment was only a portion of the larger chamber, wherein were several casks of the coarse powder used for blasting rock. The floors of both rooms were of slate slabs or flags nicely jointed, and the sides were either solid rock or masonry.

Wilkins was thoroughly disappointed, but congratulated himself on not having called in the aid of the Custom-house authorities.

"And now, sir," said Jones; "your explorations must have given you an appetite. We dine at five. Mr. Apsly and myself are alone, and I shall be glad if you will join us."

Wilkins declined on the score of his dress. Jones refused to admit the plea under the circumstances, and after a little hesitation on the part of the geologist, the trio set out for Howden Park. About a mile from the quarry they were met by an Irish car, which had been ordered by Jones to bring Arthur and himself home.

When they reached the house, Jones, turning to Wilkins, said, "I have several nice specimens in my study, which you must look at."

Wishing all the fossils in creation at the bottom of the sea, he followed his host along the long passages before described, until he threw open the door of a large room. "This," said he, "is my study; and here is the specimen I wish you to see," pointing to a large slab of stone, some six feet long by five wide, covered with a convoluted mass resembling petrified snakes or eels minus their heads.

"Most curious," said Wilkins.

"To what Order or Province would you ascribe this specimen?"

"To the—a—a—Vertebrata, I should say."

"What do you say, Apsly?"

"It is a fine specimen of Fucoids (fossil sea-weed), I imagine."

Jones smiled quietly. Whatever Mr. Wilkins might be, he evidently was not a geologist.

"I should like to wash my hands."

"Certainly! follow me into my dressing-room!"

"And is your bed-room beyond? All *en suite*, I see."

"I confess I am something of a Sybarite. I hate toiling upstairs; so I have arranged all my rooms on the ground floor."

"How exceedingly nice!" said Wilkins, looking around him with an air of admiration, and coolly walking straight on to his host's bed-room.

"What can he want, I wonder?" thought Jones, who suspected that his guest was other than he

appeared to be, for with the habitual caution of men who have much to conceal, he was always on the *qui vive* for a foe under the mask of a friend.

At this moment a housemaid came in hurriedly, exclaiming, "Please, sir, Mr. Mason's fallen down dead, or in a fit. What shall we do, sir?"

"Always the worst first," said Jones. "I'll follow you." Then turning to his guest, "Excuse me; my butler is seized with sudden illness. I will return to you directly."

Wilkins availed himself of this unexpected opportunity to examine the room, but the only object that attracted his attention was an iron safe let into the wall, immediately adjoining the head of the bedstead.

He would have given a hundred pounds to have examined the contents of that chest for five minutes. But there stood between him and his curiosity, a barrier of three inches of solid iron. He sighed, and left the room.

Jones soon returned, saying, "How servants love to exaggerate! It was only a fainting fit after all. Come, Mr. Wilkins, let me show you the road to the drawing-room."

The conversation at dinner chiefly referred to topics of general interest; during dessert it assumed a more personal character. Had Mr. Wilkins ever been in Arcady before? Had he seen any of the natural curiosities of the country?

"Only the peasants" was the reply!

"In what respect are they curious?"

"As economists! It seems they live, marry, rear large families, subscribe to schools, chapels, and Bible societies, all out of less money than some people pay for blacking their shoes."

"Oh! for heaven's sake!" said Jones; "don't moot that subject. If you knew them you would confess they are paid according to their worth; but what I meant by curiosities was the old cathedral, for example, or the castle at Cort."

"I have seen none of them."

Jones laughed and chatted with his guests in the pleasantest and frankest manner, while he was secretly endeavouring to read the thoughts of Wilkins, whom he imagined to be the tool of Mrs. Maddocks, for with his usual shrewdness he more than suspected that lady of plotting against him.

Ranger had been instructed to call at the real Mrs. Prosser's, when he found that neither that lady nor her servant had any idea of sending goods by water to St. Olaff's. Moreover, the unknown had called subsequent to the day when Arthur's boat was wrecked, and evidently was anxious to make Gally speak. Ranger had of late more than once suspected he had been followed, and now Mr. Wilkins turned up at the quarries, and considering he knew nothing of geology his interest in the slate formation was very remarkable. Jones really enjoyed his

position as he sat contemplating his guests, and congratulating himself that he could see through that clever London fellow.

At ten o'clock Wilkins rose to leave.

"The car shall take you down to Sandcombe."

"No, thank you; I won't give you that trouble."

"Stay! I insist upon it. Fill your glass! Apsly, the bottle's with you. Excuse me a moment."

Jones left the room.

Immediately afterwards, by the opposite door, a tall person entered, walked to the sideboard, stooped, and took up a bottle of wine.

"Not a drop more, Mr. Jones," said Wilkins; "not a drop more, I beg of you!"

The man turned round and said quietly, "My name is Mason, sir."

"Good ——" exclaimed Wilkins, "I could have sworn 'twas your master."

Arthur laughed, and in the midst of the scene the host entered *in propria personâ*, and asked the reason of the mirth.

"Why, I have just been addressing your butler, believing him to be yourself."

Jones looked up at his servant. "Mason, is that you? I thought you were in bed."

"No, sir; I am much better now, thank you." The pallor of sickness had obliterated the man's natural ruddy hue, and Jones was also struck with the resemblance to himself. Affecting not to notice it, he

said, "I have ordered the trap for you, Mr. Wilkins; but nevertheless I hope you won't hurry."

Wilkins of course rose.

"The car won't be round for ten minutes; let me persuade you to take a glass of brandy-and-water before you leave."

"Not a drop more, thank you!"

As soon as the vehicle was announced, Jones followed his guest into the hall. The servant threw open the door.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Jones, as he said good-bye, "you have my hat on!"

Wilkins hurriedly pulled it off, and with it his wig came tumbling over his eyes.

Jones turned his head, but not before he detected the natural colour of his visitor's hair.

"Run into my room, Mason, I fancy Mr. Wilkins left his hat there."

"Those who hide can best find," thought the victim of Mr. Jones's craft, as he shoved on his artificial locks, and found them sticky with the gum which had lined the back part of his host's hat. "Not a bad dodge," said he to himself. "I may use it some day myself."

He had too much tact to display any feeling of annoyance at his discomfiture, and with admirable self-possession expressed his acknowledgment of Mr. Jones's hospitality, and drove off.

"So then, Apsly, you intend leaving to-morrow in

time to catch the early train?" said Jones, when he returned to the dining-room.

"I think so."

"Then I shall not see you in the morning?"

"It would be absurd to disturb you."

Although it was summer, Jones sat before a fire when he retired to his study. Intensely exciting thought as often chills as heats the blood.

He had come to another crisis in his career, and that selfishness which eighteen years before led him into slippery paths still lay as a bandage before his eyes, and the terrible words, "whom he will he hardeneth," might at this moment have been spoken of him.

Eighteen years ago he stood in the presence of two spiritual beings: one whispered in his ear, "Earth's prizes are worth winning;" the other said, "Love truly, and God will bless you!"

The voice of the one came with power, and the tones of the other were simply sweet.

Then, as all fools do in starting, he tried to cheat himself with a compromise. He would serve Ambition first, and Love after. But the two ways only led farther apart, as the months rolled on. It befel him, as it befalls many; the opportunity of cancelling the debt never came.

Yet he had loved once. Nay, he never loved but one—and now the time was approaching when, having satisfied his ambition, he might worship the discarded divinity. But the divinity would not be worshipped.

With his feet on the fender and his arms crossed, he sat staring into the embers of the fire, shivering as he drunk the cup fate held to his lips.

Why should she entertain any other feeling than hatred for him who led her in the paths of destruction? Who had marred that young life which but for him would have been the joy and solace of a pure and trusting heart?

He did not pause to ask himself that question: as in younger days, he chose to pander to the deepest-rooted passion of his soul, so now he resolved to listen to no other voice than his own will. Money was his, no matter how gotten! Honours were bestowed upon him—it was silly to ask by what arts they were won.

As he said to Arthur during the race, there were no more prizes within his reach—or at least easily within his reach—therefore he had finished with ambition. He tried to cheat his conscience by urging in his own defence, that had Mrs. Maddocks not turned on him, had she not tried to pry maliciously into his secrets, he would have spared her; but now he owed her no consideration. He would not take any steps against her—not he—he would only open the floodgate to the natural current of events; ultimately she would find in him her best friend, and in another land they would together begin a new life. Yes, to win her he would give up everything, even his power and position, which ordinary men deem invaluable.

CHAPTER XV.

So long a time has elapsed since anything has been heard or seen of Dr. Maddocks and his family, that out of respect to their worth and virtue, their sayings and doings should be chronicled, even if no other reason existed.

When he reached home with Agnes, Oriana was momentarily diverted from the consideration of her ailments by the pallor of her daughter's countenance, and old Mrs. Murray also became alarmed.

"If you were not in a doctor's house I would cure you, my dear, with a mild course of Dr. De Roos's Renal Pills, which have been of the greatest possible service to me; but now, I suppose, you will have to suffer as I have done, uncomplainingly, because, as for your father, my dear, he'll neglect you just as he has neglected your mother."

"Do hold your tongue, Oriana," said Mrs. Murray. "You're enough to aggravate a saint!"

"I've learnt to suffer in silence," said the daughter, with an air of terrible resignation that caused Mrs. Murray to explode.

"Ay!" said that lady, looking pickling vinegar at the invalid, "as Murray used to say, 'You're like the Portuguese devils, when you are good you're too good!'"

By this time Agnes and the Doctor had disappeared.

Day after day passed by, and still the Doctor saw no improvement in his child's health; he prescribed tonics, talked of change of air, went to Leamington for a week, returned, and still the languor and want of appetite remained. He was at his wits' end; his medical skill was exhausted, and when he proposed going up to London to consult Dr. Watson, Agnes manifested so much aversion to the plan, that he agreed to forego it.

Nowadays folks laugh at the notion of dying of love, and yet every person can point to one or more young girls in his experience, who have been so shattered by disappointed affection as to become the easy prey of disease. And if there be some who find rest in the grave from the weariness of an unloved life, there are thousands in whom the canker of an aimless, hopeless existence has eaten up and destroyed all those gentler graces and winning amabilities which are the true life and manifestation of a woman's soul.

As the Doctor watched the poison withering the energies of his daughter's spirit, he cast about him for some remedy that might arrest the malady. He

believed, and truly, that Agnes was devotedly attached to Arthur Apsly. He believed, and truly, that his late neglect had affected his child's health, and might ultimately cause her death. He believed, but not truly, that Arthur had sought to gain the affections of Mary Maddocks simply because she was the heiress of Surdon Hall; and fully persuaded of the truth of this notion, he argued that if Agnes could change places with Mary, Arthur would likewise change. He did not pause to consider that if his estimate of Arthur was correct, he could never be a fitting husband for any woman, much less for such a gentle tender being as Agnes.

But how was the change to be effected? In the Maddocks history there was a family secret of which he was the custodian. His father and mother had married in Scotland, and subsequently they were led to believe that this marriage was illegal, when they were remarried according to the rites of the Church of England; but this discovery and remarriage did not take place until after the birth of John his late brother. Could this story be proved, he would be able to regain possession of the Surdon Hall estates, which his brother (being illegitimate) had unlawfully enjoyed during his life, and had no power to will to his widow.

The Doctor seized a pen, and made out an account showing how the proceeding would stand:—

Dr.

My mother's memory dishonoured ;

John's illegitimacy proved ;

The Maddocks' history sullied ;

My own peace of mind destroyed ;

The condemnation of honourable men well earned.

Ch.

Agnes's health restored ;

Agnes's marriage insured ;

Agnes's happiness gained ;

My own satisfaction at witnessing her joy.

He rose from his seat and paced his room in an agony of mind. "I cannot see her wither before my eyes. Mother! mother! forgive me! But you would not have me let her die? My only child!—my beautiful, loving child!"

Then the memory of his much-sorrowing mother grew vividly fresh, and he recalled the day, the hour, the room and the chair on which she sat, when she beckoned him to her side and told him this sad chapter in her history—told him how it haunted her day and night, and though his father never spoke of it, and the boys were never to be told of it, she resolved to take him into her confidence, lest at some future day he might make the discovery, and insist upon his rights.

"And now, Richard," she said, "my honour is in your keeping, what will you do?" Then the boy, impulsive, loving, flung his arms round his mother's neck, and said, that her fair name should be dearer to him than life itself. He felt once more the wet tears and the warm kisses on his cheek, and remem-

bered how this confidence was a bond of mutual love which brought his mother and himself into still closer ties of affection than they had ever known, till Richard and his mother became as one in the eyes of the family, never to be thought of apart.

And now, when his own head was gray, was he to turn traitor, and feed the gossips of England with the narrative of that story which he was pledged to keep secret; insure that exposure of his mother's name, the very anticipation of which had caused her so much suffering?

Backwards and forwards he paced the room, wretched and irresolute, until at last he opened his desk and took out a red morocco case containing a miniature of the unhappy lady. Seating himself, he touched the spring, and before him were disclosed the well-known lineaments, still tenderly loved, despite his traitorous thoughts.

It was a handsome, but yet a sorrowful face, full of expression, indicating a thoughtful and amiable disposition. He looked at it steadily for some time; a mist rose before his eyes; tear after tear rolled down his cheek, until his body shook with weeping.

A light hand was laid on his shoulder, and the voice he always loved, said tremulously, "What is the matter, darling?"

Startled and amazed at being detected in this unprecedented state of mind, he closed the portrait and answered angrily, "What brought you here?"

Agnes started at the unaccustomed tone, and would have run out of the room; but her father, instantly recollecting himself, exclaimed, "Forgive me, sweetest! I hardly recognised you at first; I thought you were lying down."

"Yes, dear, so I was. But I am afraid you are poorly."

"No, no, my child, only fretting a little."

"Not about me, dear, I hope?"

"Yes!—I mean no—no, not exactly about you, dear!"

"I am sure there's not the least occasion to be anxious on my account. I am quite well!"

"What have you in your hand?"

"Oh! I had almost forgotten. I've got some letters for you, and I want you to read this extraordinary announcement in the 'Arlerigge Banner:' 'We understand, on reliable authority, that the possession of one of the largest estates in this county, now in the possession of a lady, will be contested by a near relative, who claims to be the heir-at-law. We refrain from mentioning names; but we believe we may state that the eminent firm of Blasbrooke and Westgrove are the solicitors to the plaintiff.' "

The Doctor turned very pale, and the newspaper rustled with the trembling of his hands.

"What does it mean?" said Agnes.

"I cannot understand."

"Evidently it refers to Aunt."

"I fancy you are right; but I'll see Blasbrooke to-day."

Agnes now left the room; and after re-reading the paragraph, the Doctor turned to his letters. One was a thick bundle, which he opened first, and he found it to contain the correspondence between his father and his solicitor respecting the validity of his first marriage. Fearing lest he might be again tempted to make use of the letters, or that they might fall into other hands, he applied a lighted match and saw them reduced to ashes.

From whom could they have come? and what was the object of the sender? These mysteries completely defied the Doctor's shrewdness.

The next issue of the 'Banner' stated that the proprietors had been the victims of a diabolical joke; that they had published the statement respecting a certain property being about to be contested on the authority of a letter purporting to have been written by the plaintiff, but which proved to be a forgery. A reward of five hundred pounds was also advertised to be paid to any person who would give information that would convict the forger, such person not being himself the perpetrator of the offence.

Thus it was that Mr. Jones's first bolt shot in the dark failed to reach its mark!

Fervently did the Doctor congratulate himself that he resisted the temptation which had pursued him for so many days.

The following letter, written about this date to

Arthur Apsly, who was staying at Clifton for a short time, is a little curious :—

“ MY DEAR ARTHUR,

“ St. Olaf's, August.

“ Those persons who deny the existence of a Providence must be very indifferent observers of passing events, because but little attention is needed to perceive how constantly our affairs are overruled, for the comfort of believers and the judgment of those who resist the will of the Deity.

“ You from whom I have no secrets have for some time past understood the nature of my intentions towards a certain lady. Rivals started up, causing me occasional anxiety and momentary discomfort ; but just when I felt most disposed to repine at this interference with my plans, lo ! the bubble bursts, and Dr. Maddocks steps forward to claim his brother's estate as the heir-at-law.

“ It is reported that a flaw has been discovered in the will. Of this I know nothing save rumour. I feel, however, that you and I have much cause for thankfulness that we have been preserved from committing a serious blunder.

“ I think I never saw such splendid peaches as those in our garden ; I am sure they would be worth even at this season two shillings each at Covent Garden ; but in this heathen country there is not a soul who would give as much per dozen for them. Don't imagine I am about to turn market-gardener. I merely mention their value as an illustration of their perfection.

“ By the way, go into the Durdham Downs Nursery some day, and ascertain if Garraway has any vines of the Bowood Muscat grape ; they are very delicious. I tasted some at Filey yesterday, when I went to call on the Bishop. I don't think there are finer tomatos on the continent than ours, and we have them in profusion.

“ The rascally beadle has been drunk again. I believe he was intoxicated when conducting Lord Kintole over the cathedral yesterday ; at least, so the organist told me. I hear of several coveys of partridges in this neighbourhood. Of course you will be at home for the first. Mayflower won't be fit to go ! Don't forget the vines.

“ Affectionately yours,

“ E. APSLY.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is something awful to a woman in the spectacle of a man's grief. When Agnes left her father, after surprising him in tears, she hurried to her own room and shut herself up. What could the strange spectacle mean? By what process of logic she knew not, but by some method of reasoning, or rather intuition, she felt constrained to connect her father's unusual exhibition of feeling with herself, with her grandmother's picture, and with the Surdon Hall estate; yet the precise relation of these to each other was an enigma.

Something evidently had occurred of unusual importance, and whatever it might be it somehow concerned her. She brooded over the puzzle for an hour, but only grew more perplexed as she tried more earnestly to unravel the tangled skein. The only conclusion she arrived at was, that ever since her visit to St. Helen's the Doctor had been unusually depressed. Since that period she also had been constantly ailing, but her malady she knew was

more of the soul than the body. Would it not be worth while to don a brighter air, to fight valiantly with the array of sad fancies that bore her down, and see what effect such an effort would have on the Doctor?

Yes! she would try; she would no longer play the part of the love-lorn maiden; she would smile and look happy; by degrees she might become victorious over herself, and thus her reward would be double.

It was no easy task that Agnes set herself to perform, since a woman's work, or rather a maiden's work, affords none of that excitement which men derive in the struggle for bread, for riches, or for power. Three-fourths of every woman's mind before marriage is occupied with dress; the remainder is set aside for love, small works of graceful charity, and what are satirically termed elegant accomplishments. There are of course some exceptions to this rule—women who think, who write, who paint; but these are to the many as rare as apple-blossoms in November.

In some measure Agnes was one of these exceptions, inasmuch as dress was not the principal object of her life—for music occupied even a larger part of her affections. Yet she could not all day toil at the piano, or rush about from church to church to agonize the organ-pipes; therefore when she proposed to banish the master-thought from her mind,

there appeared a great void, from the contemplation of which she shrank. Nevertheless love was the ruling passion of her nature, just as sweetness is the never failing characteristic of the violet; and although it now assumed no other than the commonplace form of filial affection, in this power she rose and resolved to conquer.

Victory was delayed for many days: sometimes she fancied herself beaten; but, like a bird whose lightness of form is compensated by strength of wing, which enables it to rise and recover its lost way as soon as the storm lulls, so did Agnes in the lapses of feeling regain her vantage ground and advance still farther on the pathway she had chosen.

"If I had only something to do, I should be better. I get so weary of embroidery, and nobody cares to listen to my music."

If the Doctor (silly man) had set off to the continent with his daughter, she would have found, in the concert-rooms and picture-galleries of France and Italy, so much to divert her thoughts from everything painful, that she would have returned a new creature in six months. But he never dreamed of such a remedy, and her mother only attended to her own ailments, and her grandmother thought of nobody but herself, bemoaning the inattention she experienced, or fancied she experienced. So Agnes was left to her own devices.

Had she no female friend—no trusty confidant?

No not one! The friendship which might have grown into enduring intimacy with her cousin was soon cut short, and no one supplied her place. Without work, with little society, possessing a tender heart, and an imaginative disposition, it was necessary that she should find some occupation, or relapse into that morbid melancholy which is the sure prelude of disease.

Walking through Shale End with her father one day, she noticed several dirty children rolling about the gutters. "Surely," thought she, "I might do good if I established a school, and became the teacher of these poor little waifs of fortune."

At first she hesitated to communicate her notion to the Doctor, until the idea took such complete possession of her that she was compelled to speak.

The Doctor listened kindly, as he always did to everything his pet said, yet he shook his head and smiled, half sceptically.

"I don't think, my dear, you know or even dream, what trouble you would entail upon yourself by setting up a school. Have you ever been in a room full of poor children?"

"No, dear!"

"Then you can have no conception of the olfactory treat. It is terrible, my dear:—you won't be able to stand it."

"I shall insist on cleanliness as an indispensable qualification for admittance!"

"Then you will have to canvass the mothers, who will promise you to send their children, pronouncing in your hearing boundless laudations of yourself, which will be followed by the sharpest criticisms as soon as you are out of sight. In a short time they will think they have a vested right in your services, and will bully you as if they paid for their children's education, and insist upon knowing why Mary Jane wasn't put into three syllables along with Fanny Anne! Really, my pet, if you will be guided by your old daddy you will give it up."

"If my old daddy will get me a room, furnish it, give me some school books, maps, etc., his pet will show him that she is not so helpless as he thinks."

"Well, well!" thought the Doctor; "if it pleases her and occupies her mind I won't oppose her. Poor thing! she has had a sore trial for one so young."

Ultimately a room was fitted up in an appropriate manner. Agnes canvassed the parents, found them anxious to send their children to school, and apparently grateful for the opportunity afforded them.

"Oh! dear me!" said her mother, "you'll be the death of me, Agnes; those horrid children are always carrying disease about, and you will give us the cholera, or the scarlet-fever, or the small-pox, or some other terrible complaint. I do wish you would be content to live as a young lady, and let the poor people's children alone."

Agnes turned a deaf ear to this remonstrance, and opened her school on the following Monday, with no less than twenty pupils. From that day forth she had no longer occasion to complain that she had nothing to do, and no child more enjoyed the half holiday on Wednesday, and the whole one on Saturday, than did the amateur schoolmistress.

The Doctor used regularly to escort his daughter to and from the school-room. In wet weather they drove, in fine they walked. In less than a month the scholars increased to thirty, when she was compelled to employ an assistant, for whom her father cheerfully paid.

The room would not hold more, and many applicants had to be turned away, till at last it came to be considered an honour to belong to Miss Maddocks's school.

Agnes was not slow to introduce music:—first singing; at length a harmonium was purchased, and for some months an hour was daily devoted to the cultivation of this art.

Health came back to the schoolmistress; her eyes glowed, her cheeks grew rosy, her step became elastic, the tone of her mind strengthened, and in six weeks she became a new creature.

"'Pon my word, Oriana," said the Doctor to his wife; "I think it would be a fine thing if you and your mother were to follow Agnes's example and start a school between you; or one each, if you think

proper. You would find the bouquet 'de corduroy and fustian' an admirable tonic."

"Richard," said his wife solemnly, "If you can stand by and daily see me withering away, without offering to stay the insidious approach of the disease that is undermining my constitution, at least don't add insult to injury by deriding the sufferings of the woman you promised to love and cherish."

"Whew!" said the Doctor. "How long have you been composing that speech? Impromptu, I suppose? Dear me! what talents you possess for public speaking! Why your prelections would be admirable, especially on the relation between the first and third person."

"I don't know to whom you allude, Doctor Maddocks! I never spoke of any third person."

So saying the injured woman retired to indulge in a little wild linseed-tea, which she had found to be of great service to her, especially at lunch time.

Once more the Doctor was a happy man. Agnes was quite well, and he had not betrayed his mother's secret, as the price of her recovery.

CHAPTER XVII

" MY DEAR ARTHUR,

" St. Olaff's, Sept., 18—.

" Fearing lest any plans of yours might be affected by the contents of my last letter, I write to tell you that the story of Mrs. Maddocks's being disturbed in the possession of her property is a pure fabrication.

" I intend to call at the Hall shortly, and will deliver any message you may charge me with.

" When are you coming home ?

" Your fond father,

" Rev. Arthur Apsly, Clifton."

" E. APSLY."

It will be seen from this letter that Arthur was still in the vicinity of the St. Vincent's rocks; and from his prolonged absence it is but natural to conclude that he was enjoying himself.

If to be the centre of a set of pretty girls, and one or two flirting married ladies, be happiness, Arthur was in Elysium.

" Do you know Mr. Apsly ?"

" O yes! I met him at the Bereton's."

" Isn't he handsome ?"

" Excessively !"

"Have you heard him preach?"

"No!"

"O, then! do come to St. Cutholm's next Sunday morning; you can have a seat in our pew."

Any tidings from the next world, and any directions as to the road, are sure to be favourably received by the properly regulated female mind. Ladies have more time for gossip and religion than their heathen husbands and brothers, and very many of them are presumed to improve their opportunities; but when the former is fostered and the latter advocated by a handsome young man—one of the heirs of the apostolic succession—it is astonishing how devotion grows; but it is not surprising that the teacher should become almost a divinity.

Arthur went to entertainments, large and small, got up riding parties, and pic-nics, and preached on Sundays.

In the capacity of a minister no one could deny his talent; but it was especially gratifying to the aforesaid ladies that so good a young man was so accessible and so liberal in his views.

He didn't oppose innocent gaiety; asceticism was a disease of Christianity, therefore rich people, if they respected the decalogue, and were very sound in believing doctrines they could not understand, might hope to roll in a chariot not only on earth but up to heaven.

Several very pretty girls felt it their duty to con-

VOL. III. N

sult him as to their spiritual state; and never did fair devotees approach a better looking or more amiable catechist.

Those young ladies who had imbibed puritan notions in their youth, whose parents probably had always attended chapel before and when their fortune was making, were pleased to learn that a taste for millinery and High Church principles were quite compatible with each other. Arthur informed these unlearned young creatures that the terms high and low, applied to the Church, were a device of the enemy; he himself, and those who thought with him, were simply "Church"—nothing more nor less. Theirs was a catholic faith; those who were content with the world as they found it might safely partake of its innocent pleasures—such as balls and evening parties; and those who were troubled with missions might find relief in sisterhoods.

This handsome expounder of orthodox truth was obliged to receive sundry presents of needlework; and in three weeks from his leaving home he had been presented with enough slippers to last him for his life; and, had his admirers been patrons of the see of Glo'ster and Bristol, Arthur would have been their next bishop. The Rector of St. Cutholm thought of offering him a curacy; but, growing jealous of the young clergyman's popularity, he changed his mind, and never again asked him to occupy his pulpit. Arthur thereupon went over to

St. Luke's, and brought half the Cutholmites over with him.

One of the difficulties which a clergyman (young and attractive) has to contend with is the flood of female society which hems him in on every side. If he be a vain man, he will become so puffed up with self-esteem as to endanger the safety of his buttons. If an impressionable being, his heart will be afflicted with a dozen affections simultaneously, to the imminent peril of that organ; and, as more than one married lady will serve to swell the torrent, the danger of a scandal cannot be easily avoided.

The last polish which a gentleman gets before he is turned out of hand finished, he receives from his lady friends; but the wear and tear of ruder life always brings up the grain to the surface, so that the nature of the material is easily seen, whether it be Spanish mahogany, British oak, or plain soft deal; and if there be any cracks and flaws in the fabric they too will be easily detected, and their extent examined and noted. The preacher, however, is so constantly being smoothed over with this varnishing mixture that men know not of what stuff he is made: whether he be only fitted for the drawing-room,—an elaborate piece of furniture sacred to full dress, or in truth a strong stout seat or sideboard on which any amount of weight may be placed. The result is that men assign the priesthood to their wives and daughters, just as they give them pet dogs or any

other kind of plaything, and tolerate them in their rooms as the friends of their female relatives whom they must not offend on peril of their domestic peace.

The disadvantage of this notion is, that men of business, professional men, sound-hearted strong-minded country gentlemen, and other fine varieties of the *genus homo* allow religion to remain an institution adapted for Sunday, and to be the privileged possession of the "petticoats" and the "priests."

Arthur Apsly had received so many applications of this aforementioned lacquer during his sojourn on the banks of the Avon, that he hardly knew the true nature of his own constitution, whether indeed it was capable of work, or only fitted to continue "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever," as long as he should remain single.

Nothing is easier than to ridicule the individual who has been the victim of female blandishments, to laugh at the fool who "has allowed the women to turn his head." It is not so easy, however, to resist the power that works this deteriorating change, as all men from Solomon to Alcibiades have found. To be appealed to, cajoled, and flattered, by all the pretty owners of the prettiest black and blue eyes in the parish, is a discipline not often improving to the mind. The crowning temptation that St. Antony withstood was the charms of a beautiful woman. In his case the attack was conducted by one only; if,

however, the assailants had numbered a score, would his saintship have triumphed ?

It is therefore asserted on behalf of our young clerical friend that his good looks, pleasant manner, and fine preaching, raised him up such a host of admirers as to imperil the just balance of his understanding. It is further urged that the respectable antiquity above quoted was never tried like this Arcadian curate, and yet his fall was not assured.

He smilingly quaffed the sparkling wine of woman's wit evoked to please his lighter humours; he sighed in sympathy with the Madonna-like penitents who came to him for advice; and, notwithstanding he knew more than one sugar-baker's daughter whose "wee penny" would be two score thousand pounds, he never attempted or desired to appropriate one of these ladies to himself. Was it that the incense of their common homage was too precious to be given up at the price of one of their dowries? or did he long to escape from the enervating influence of their lavish admiration? Was he contented to shine for ever on parade, or did he yearn, like the war horse, for the mad excitement of the battle? But for the following circumstance he might have debated the question for years and never have arrived at a solution.

He was riding home to his lodgings from a dinner-party in the country late one night, mounted on a hired hack. Trotting leisurely down an easy incline,

the brute fell heavily, throwing its rider on his head on a patch of fresh spread stones, and then it contrived to roll over him.

Arthur was severely shaken, stunned, and his face bled freely from several cuts. At the bottom of the hill he found his horse grazing, and with some difficulty got on his back, and rode directly to a surgeon.

Ultimately the poor fellow was put to bed, and for some days his sufferings were very great. "The devil fell sick, and the devil a saint would be," is a well-known adage, and often quoted in derision against those mental and spiritual changes which date from beds of sickness. But the victim of acute disease, or the subject of a dangerous accident, must possess an iron nature if serious thoughts do not occupy his mind when his life is in danger, or when he is prevented by pain and weakness from following his usual avocations; much more one whose work is to preach righteousness would be likely, under such circumstances, to examine himself touching his manner of living.

The result of this examination on the part of Arthur Apsly was, that he would alter his ways, turn his back on frivolity, and find refuge in parish work from the enervating influence of female admiration. When he made this resolve his face was covered with plaisters, and every bone in his body ached and seemed to be out of joint.

The Rector having been informed of Arthur's mishap, came to Clifton to nurse him, and made himself very useful in the sick-room; so much so, that his son was really touched with gratitude, and thanked him as warmly as if his father had made some serious sacrifice on his behalf.

"Doctor," said the Rector to the medical attendant as he was conducting him down stairs, "what do you think of my son's case?"

"Time only is required to make a perfect cure of him."

"Will his face be scarred?"

"Inevitably."

"Dear me, how distressing!" Then after a pause he asked, "What was the meaning of the plaistering across his nose?"

"It is broken, sir, literally smashed."

"You don't mean to say so? Then he's ruined!"

"Ruined!" said the Doctor, with some astonishment.

"Yes, sir. What girl worth having would marry a curate with a broken nose?"

At last the patient became well enough to sit up and move about his room. Now and then his fingers traced the outlines of the plaisters on his face, just as blind men read raised characters, and no letters ever conveyed more correct information to the sightless than did the edges of the diachylon reveal to the invalid the sad nature of his accident.

Doubtless it manifested great weakness and vanity, especially in a clergyman; but Arthur could not make up his mind to consult a glass for more than a week after he left his bedroom; and when he saw that the fine Grecian outline of his nose had been exchanged for a rounded ridge of bone and cartilage widely extended at the base, he felt very sick, and resorted to a glass of B. and S.

It might have been his natural heroism, perhaps it was the exhilarating effect of the beverage he had prescribed for himself. At any rate (without being too particular in tracing the history of the cause), when the sensation of nausea passed away, he vowed to throw vanity overboard, and set his shoulders to the wheel.

By the next post he wrote to a friend in the County Palatine to ask for a curacy he knew to be vacant, near Staleybridge; and, before the week expired, he obtained the appointment.

"When shall we return to St. Olaff's, Arthur?" said the Rector.

"I really don't know."

"Next week, I suppose?"

"I think not."

"Well, I should recommend you to try country air and a little partridge-shooting before you re-enter society here."

"I have just accepted a curacy in the manufacturing districts, where I shall find plenty of occupation."

"My dear boy, I cannot help admiring your zeal; but you know you could keep very quiet at St. Olaff's until your face got quite well. There would be very little chance of your meeting Mary Maddocks until you were fit to see her."

Arthur could not help chafing at being thus misunderstood.

"My dear sir, Miss Maddocks neither keeps me from, nor would be an inducement for me to return to Arcady."

"You don't mean to say she has refused you, Arthur?"

"As a clergyman may I not sometimes think of other things than women?"

"H'm!" said the Rector, turning his back, and looking out through the window. "He's very irritable; but I must bear with him just now. I fear though his prospects are ruined."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEEPDENE, as Lord Ravenscroft's seat was called, was an old-fashioned, lumbering mansion, prolific of doors and windows and low rooms. It was redeemed from ugliness by its fine grounds and splendid timber. Many of the trees were centuries old; grand beeches, regal oaks, and noble elms, grew singly and in clusters, while to the right of the house one of the largest oak-woods in Arcady flourished. Through the avenues of this fine remnant of a still larger forest that once called the Ravenscrofts masters, the visitor approached the mansion, as it was reverently styled by the Arcadians. No one, however, could help feeling as he came in sight of Deepdene but that it was unworthy of the park in which it stood.

The interior of the building though had many features to recommend it to those who believe in old families and old names, honoured through generations, until it becomes the pride of their descendants rather to err on the side of a quaint adherence to the taste of their ancestors than to revel in fresh paint and gilding.

The hall at Deepdene remained as it appeared when King William of glorious memory was the then Lord Ravenscroft's guest. The same old armour and pictures, the identical trophies, with some additions, still occupied the walls. Upstairs, the bed in which his high-nosed Majesty slept remained intact, and in the butler's pantry a considerable portion of the china dinner-service honoured by the king's use was still preserved, and set apart as sacred.

In a morning-room, hung with faded tapestry, ornamented with a few family portraits, and filled with carved oak furniture, black with age, Lord Ravenscroft awaited the entrance of his good mother the Dowager Lady Ravenscroft, whose invariable practice it was to breakfast with her son. The windows faced the south; but the sunlight, striking on the west wing of the house, illuminated the apartment with bright reflected light.

"Down, Bess, down!" said his lordship, meekly repelling the attentions of a magnificent greyhound, who would put her paws on his shoulder, and stick her nose into his cheek. His Lordship was dressed for shooting, and, turning his eyes to the timepiece, he saw it was nine o'clock.

"I wonder is my mother up?"

Before he could ring the bell a light step was heard crossing the hall.

Her Ladyship entered the room.

"Good morning, dear," said his lordship, meeting his mother, and kissing her.

"I am so sorry, George, to have kept you waiting. I slept so soundly that Adams could hardly wake me."

"Oh, pray don't apologise. I am in no hurry."

Lady Ravenscroft was not ashamed of her age. All her friends knew she was sixty-three from her own lips, and the peerage did not contradict her. Once she had been handsome, though only for a short time, as she herself acknowledged. No brighter eyes than hers ever answered a lover's looks. All her contemporaries envied her complexion, and said she painted: the beaux knew better. In those young days her figure was perfection; but her features were too marked to be femininely beautiful. Her hair still was soft and brown, her voice had lost none of its sweetness, and her heart was as warm as ever; but years of delicate health had drawn deep lines and many on her face; her cheeks too were hollow and wan, and her figure was bent and thin.

Those who knew her best could tell that a day seldom passed during which sickness or pain did not in some degree visit her; moreover, she had to contend with a highly nervous temperament; yet withal she maintained the most wonderful sweetness and composure.

Only one earthly thought seemed to occupy her mind, "How to render her son happy." And,

tenderly as she was attached to her old home, and jealous as she felt herself to be of her son's love, yet she was ready to quit Deepdene any day should George wish to be married.

Lord Ravenscroft will never marry as long as her ladyship lives, was the general opinion of the Arcadian dames and daughters. When this axiom was at any time stated a corollary was added :—"Her ladyship can't live for ever."

No particular conversation took place during breakfast.

"You would like to dine at seven, I presume, dear?"

His lordship replied in the affirmative, and left the room.

When mother and son were seated in the drawing-room after dinner, the door being closed,

"I have had some news this morning, George," said her Ladyship.

"Indeed!" Lord Ravenscroft was half asleep in the armchair, feeling somewhat tired after a hard day's work.

"You do not appear to be curious."

"No! Why should I?"

"The intelligence concerns yourself."

"Pray, tell me what it is then?"

"You are engaged, or rather said to be engaged, to be married."

"Who says so?"

"Lady Westerwork is my informant."

"Who is the lady?"

"Mrs. Maddocks, with whom, she says, you have been staying in Town."

Lord Ravenscroft jumped up in an excited manner, exclaiming,

"The old gossip! how dare she invent such a falsehood?"

"I didn't believe it, George; because I always felt sure you would tell me, if not of your intention, at least as soon as you had the lady's answer."

"Certainly, dear, I should."

"Do you mind telling me how you fancy this report could have arisen? You know I so seldom see any one, much less leave home, that you are my only gossip."

Lord Ravenscroft laughed, and related the story of the archery meeting. When he finished the narrative, "Now, dear," he said, "I want you to do me a favour."

"What can I do?"

"I want you to know the Maddockses."

"My dear George! really you surprise me! Of all women in Arcady, and after this rumour too! Really, you can't be serious."

"I am though!"

"Consider, dear, what it involves. Of course you know Mrs. Maddocks's history. She is a labourer's daughter, and I believe her reputation was lightly spoken of before she married her late husband."

"Have you ever heard the correct narrative of her earlier years? Have you ever known anything to her disadvantage since her marriage?"

"No, dear."

"Was she not the means of reforming her husband in all things save his love of port-wine? Has she abused her power as an owner of large property? Has she ever admitted objectionable people into her society since her marriage?"

"Upon my word, George, I cannot reply to your questions. I have nothing to urge for or against Mrs. Maddocks as long as she is a stranger to me; but since you have, to my great satisfaction, denied the truth of your rumoured engagement, I see no reason for wishing to know her."

"My dear mother, I have not asked you to make her acquaintance for your own gratification, but to please me."

"You know, George, I have never denied you anything in my life that I could honestly give or do for you, and it grieves me to think that I could, or rather ought to, refuse any request of yours—still ——"

"Tell me, dear. Supposing Mrs. Maddocks to have been by birth one of our small gentry, against whom there had been some early scandal, would you have excluded her from your house, although her subsequent conduct had been irreproachable?"

"We cannot be too particular whom we know."

The very severity with which we treat each other is our best safeguard. If we were disposed to wink at folly, half the women would make fools of themselves or worse."

"Quite right when you are dealing with the frivolous and wicked ; but I cannot understand the impossibility of removing the ban of excommunication from an unfortunate woman after she has given proof of her good conduct. However this does not apply to Mrs. Maddocks : what her earliest history may have been is not germane to the matter. The question is, how has she carried herself since she emerged from obscurity ? Now in her case no breath has ever been raised against her propriety of behaviour since she married. I can testify to her manners and address ; but the real point at issue is : is a woman allowed the privilege to rise in life, which we accord to every man ? Of course it rarely happens that she can improve her position except by marriage, is then the misfortune of her birth irremovable when, except in this particular, she becomes a fit companion for the most refined lady ?"

"I never could argue, George, as you know. I retain my opinions, although you beat me in discussion. Yet why are you so anxious to entertain Mrs. Maddocks ?"

"One reason is, because Lady Westerwork was so rude to her at the archery meeting, although she knew I had been the means of bringing her there.

Another is—I like her easy, chatty manner, and consider her a very remarkable person. Another is—”

“Stay, George! stay! I’ve heard enough. If you really wish it, I will ask her here. I have not so many years to live that I can afford to thwart your wishes, and perhaps estrange your affection. Only you will promise me, George, that when you do mean to marry you will tell me.”

The tears stood in the good lady’s eyes as she held out her hand to her son, who clasped it affectionately.

“Bless you, darling!” she said. “The woman who wins your heart may be envied.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE day after this conversation, Mrs. Maddocks received the following note by the hands of Lord Ravenscroft:—

“Deepdene, Friday.

“DEAR MRS. MADDOCKS,

“I am, as you may have heard, prevented by ill-health from visiting: indeed, I rarely leave the house, and am thus excluded a great deal from society; this is my excuse for not calling on you, but I trust you will accept this letter as if it were a personal visit.

“If you can put up with a very dull and quiet house, it will give me much pleasure to see you and Miss Maddocks here for a few days early next week.

“Believe me,

“_____.”

Mrs. Maddocks trembled visibly when she perused this unexpected invitation. Of course it must have been given at the instigation of Lord Ravenscroft. Was her dream to be realised? Had she really captivated this truly excellent, amiable nobleman? What a salve for the wounds of the Westerwork

shafts! An invited guest at a peer's house, she, the daughter of an Arcadian workman. The days of romance had not come to an end. Men always could work their way up the ladder of preferment, but women's chances have in every age been few. Mrs. Maddocks mentally looked back down the ascent she had climbed, and for a moment felt dizzy—for a moment only—because she caught Lord Ravenscroft's eye, and remembered that there was a higher point still to reach. Already she was breathing the air of that social height, and respiration seemed perfectly easy; evidently she must have been a changeling, and was now re-entering her native sphere.

During this reverie she still held Lady Ravenscroft's note in her hand, and then recollecting herself, she smiled and gave it to Mary.

Of course Lord Ravenscroft returned to Deepdene with Mrs. Maddocks's affirmative answer in his pocket.

Lady-readers will understand and sympathise with Mrs. Maddocks and Mary in the painful deliberations that ensued as to what dresses they should take with them. Velvet and lace and silk, muslins and merinos were hunted up, discussed, approved, or condemned, with becoming decorum and solemnity. The ladies' maids were consulted, and their remarks were duly noted and weighed until a decision was arrived at. Every night's sleep, however, that intervened before the appointed day suggested different arrange-

ments, until at length mother and daughter confessed to being perfectly bewildered. At the last moment the maids were permitted, to have nearly their own way, and not more than half the things their mistresses wanted were left behind.

When beneath the shadows of the Deepdene woods, as her carriage rolled rapidly along the drive, Mrs. Maddocks's courage almost failed her. To have faced fifty peers would scarcely have made her pulse beat slow or fast; but to meet one peeress was a terrible ordeal. To meet her, not during the frigid moments of a morning call, but to endure the ordeal of quiet, domestic life, when every gesture, look, and word would be noticed by the penetrating eyes of one of her own sex, was indeed the severest test of her good-breeding that could have been designed. One thought sustained her—the reflection that he who prepared the trial must have deemed her equal to it.

Mary and herself imagined that either her Ladyship or Lord Ravenscroft would meet them on their arrival. Nothing of the kind. The footman assisted them to descend, the butler bowed as he held the door open, and then led them across that hall—grim and silent, the shrine of so many family monuments. "Is it not an icy welcome?" thought both ladies: "no one to greet us but the servants, and rusty effigies standing on brackets on the walls." Their footsteps echoed, though they trod lightly, and

they could hear their own breathing as they passed along, and entered a corridor that led to the staircase. Here the housekeeper met them, conducted them to their rooms, saying she would send tea up directly, and that the dinner-hour was seven o'clock.

The furniture of the bedroom was at least a century old, save a wardrobe with a plate-glass front. The chairs were high-backed and straight, the mirror on the dressing-table was a small oval in an ebony frame; the bed was a four-poster, with such attenuated posts, that they looked as if all the flesh had been peeled off them leaving nothing but the bones—on which hung curtains of ancient chintz. A few modern paintings on the walls hid some of the horrible birds of paradise that grinned at each other from golden perches, and seemed as if they were only prevented from screaming by mutual fear. On the table lay two or three annuals of an age gone by, and one or two later 'Books of Beauty,' and also a nice copy of the Scriptures. The floor was covered with the softest carpet in which the feet sunk, and the sofa also had been supplied with a spring seat. The windows looked out on the lawn, and the breath of flowers came in with the soft south wind. It was a dear old room, though it awed its new occupant when the door closed, and she felt herself to be face to face with the memories of an old name, and the *genius loci* seemed to greet her as a stranger.

What great folks might have occupied that room

and looked out at the lawn, as she now did! Was she in reality one of them, or was she an interloper? Was it all a dream, and should she wake up in the hut where she was born? She could not help contrasting her present lot with her past condition, and wondering what that solemn butler and respectful housemaid thought as they bowed and curtsied before her.

While she was considering her history, the door opened and in rushed Mary.

"Thank goodness, I have found you! They shut me up in a room alone, and I got quite frightened, so I ran out, and meeting the housekeeper she showed me your door. Is it not funny? Nothing but silence and servants, long passages and wonderful old rooms. It seems very unreal."

The mother and daughter, mutually encouraged by each other's presence, laughed merrily, and chatted vivaciously till the servant brought up tea. Then their maids came, and they separated to dress.

"When you're ready, Mary, call for me and we'll go down together."

"I wonder what her Ladyship is like," said Mary in a whisper, as she and her mother descended the stairs.

"Hush, dear! we shall see directly."

"Mrs. and Miss Maddocks!" said the footman, throwing wide the drawing-room door.

"Welcome to Deepdene!" exclaimed Lord Ra-

venscroft, as he advanced to meet his guests. "Lady Ravenscroft will be here in a few minutes. You know she is a great invalid; she generally lies down in the afternoon to gain strength for dinner."

"More suspense," thought Mrs. Maddocks, nervously watching the door, and picturing to herself the entrance of another Lady Westerwork.

The hands of the timepiece pointed to seven o'clock, the door opened, and in glided the awful lady of the mansion.

Mrs. Maddocks gave a sigh of relief as she noticed the amiable expression of her hostess's countenance, and when she heard her sweet musical voice attuned to words of kindly greeting, she could have kissed the hand so frankly given her to grasp. At once she was perfectly at ease.

It was a charming little dinner-party. Lord Ravenscroft led the conversation to topics of general interest, and Mrs. Maddocks and Mary exhibited so much unaffected knowledge, combined with such grace of expression, that her Ladyship confessed to herself "that George, as usual, is right."

Once more in the drawing-room, Mrs. Maddocks was at liberty to continue her mute inquiry as to Lord Ravenscroft's intentions. In the presence of his mother it would have been absurd to have thrown out any of those delicate baits with which ladies bring men to their sides, and as for Mary, she—oh! she was fancy free—and her mother had only to wait.

His Lordship sang with Mary, exhibited some fine line engravings to her mother, and discussed Ruskin and Florentine galleries with much interest and spirit. Yet an indifferent person might have noticed that his eyes often wandered to where Mary sat beside her Ladyship patiently unwinding a skein of silk.

Pleased with his conversation, somewhat blinded by her vanity and preconceived notion of his Lordship's opinion of herself, Mrs. Maddocks began to take the flattering unction to her soul that she was the sole object of his admiration, and more than once ventured one of those earnest looks wherewith women see into men's minds. Alas! she looked in vain, and scarcely suppressed a sigh.

Impenetrable man! What did he mean? Why did he, by bringing her to Deepdene, give her fondest hopes encouragement. It never could be a mere platonic regard. Such love could not, and never did exist any more than fire without heat. He was too honest to be a flirt, too chivalrous to delude a lady!

"Mrs. Maddocks," said his Lordship, "I have spoken to you thrice, and you haven't heard me."

"I beg your pardon. I mean it is impossible; surely, you didn't speak!"

"I did though!"

"Oh, do tell me again what you said!"

"Have you heard anything of Mr. Arthur Apaly of late?"

"No! Why should I?"

His Lordship looked surprised. "Haven't you heard of his popularity at Clifton?"

"No. Not I."

"Everybody is running after him."

"Indeed!"

"He is quite the rage, I am told!"

"Why should you look so astonished just now?" said Mrs. Maddocks.

"Simply because I had heard—stay, don't ask me anything more—I did not mean to be rude!"

"No! No! My Lord. You shall not be let off so easily after exciting my curiosity," said Mrs. Maddocks, with a smile.

His Lordship, pretending to be pointing out the prints, wrote on the back of a card: "I understood A. was to be your son-in-law."

"Nothing of the sort, I assure you!"

This little confidential chat seemed to have been mutually agreeable. At any rate, Lord Ravenscroft's spirits rose, and Mrs. Maddocks's eyes heightened as he grew more fluent, and apparently more desirous to please.

At a little after ten Lady Ravenscroft rose to retire, and her guests followed her example.

"I can't sleep at this time of night, Harriette; so I shall come to your room. What did Lord Ravenscroft question you so closely about?"

"He wanted to know if you were engaged to Arthur Apsly."

Mary affected to laugh; but she retired to her room in a very short time, considering her announcement only a few minutes previously, that she could not sleep at that time of night.

She dismissed her maid as soon as she could get rid of her, and then seated herself in the window, looking out at the moonlight that flecked the lawn.

So he thought I was engaged to Arthur Apsly, and yet he never spoke to me afterwards during the rest of the evening. Hearing a step on the gravel-walk beneath her window, she looked down. Somebody was pacing to and fro smoking a cigar. It could only be Lord Ravenscroft. She extinguished the candles, and as long as he continued to walk she watched him; saying to herself, "Oh that I knew what is passing in his mind! I should be happier if I thought he cared for me!—even in the slightest degree. But then Harriette loves him, and I must not love him too. No! no! I would not mar her happiness for the world. I will—yes, I will try and help her to win him. How can I help her? what a fool I am!"

Somehow the tears stood in her eyes when she crept shivering into bed.

According to all the received laws of etiquette, it is the height, or depth (whichever sounds best), of indelicacy, for any lady to make love to a gentleman. It is a penal offence to buy a living for yourself; but the act is always evaded by those who choose to do so, and the evaders do not suffer dishonour in con-

sequence, although they knock their shins against the corners of simony. In either path of preferment, in the Church or in matrimony, there are certain regulations which it is necessary to walk round—with clean shoes if possible, if not, care must be taken to avoid mud that won't rub out when dry. In the case of ladies, simple assault is not permissible; even a formal siege must be reprehended; but a skilfully laid ambush is their glory, which insures the outspoken envy and secret admiration of those of their own sex whom they have out-generalled.

There is no human or divine law which prevents any unmarried lady from loving any single man: she must be more silly or enthusiastic than the majority, if she stakes her happiness where success is uncertain; but having selected a target for her arrows, she may lawfully shoot at it till she is tired.

By ministering to the victim's vanity, by asking his advice, by getting up some quarrel and making him a partisan, by speaking well of him to those who will repeat the tale, by showing a preference for his society, and by a judicious use of smiles and burning looks—the creature is rendered captive and destroyed.

Mrs. Maddocks had made all these dispositions for attacking Lord Ravenscroft.

Bless us, how fond people are of thinking and speaking ill of their neighbours! Mrs. Maddocks resolved to do nothing of the kind. With the intuitive

quickness of her sex, she knew how to set about the conquest of his Lordship; but she determined that if she should win him, it should not be according to art—but from the impulse of his own heart.

“Love, pure love is too precious to be angled for by trickery. Surely he has some favourable thought towards me, else we should not be here.” The lonely heart of this poor woman throbbed and fluttered wildly, as she thought that at last there was one worth living for who perhaps might love her; and whose affection, if it might be hers, would compensate her for the long long years of her aimless, and in the highest sense loveless life; for the love of the mother for her child may exist alone, or co-exist with that other intenser joy, which those experience whose marriages are sealed by a spiritual as well as a written bond.

The Deepdene owls had half-finished their night's work before either of the two guests slept.

CHAPTER XX.

"ARE you fond of riding, Miss Maddocks?" asked Lord Ravenscroft at breakfast next morning.

"Harriette is."

"Yes, my Lord," said Mrs. Maddocks, "I can answer for her being very fond of riding."

"Thank you, Mrs. Maddocks—I owe you a debt of gratitude."

"But you know, Harriette," continued Mary, "that you care about it a great deal more than I do."

"The question is not one of comparison, my dear!"

"As the morning is so fine," said his Lordship, "I thought my mother would like a drive, and I know your company would be most agreeable to her, Mrs. Maddocks."

"Yes;" said her Ladyship, "I think it is a very nice suggestion. We might go down by Alder bank and return through the woods."

"The barouche will hold four," said his Lordship.

"But you prefer riding, dear."

Perceiving that her continued refusal might be misconstrued for unwillingness, Mary said, "I should enjoy a ride immensely." So it was arranged that they should start after lunch.

Mary having assigned to herself the part of the unselfish maiden, had only demurred to riding with Lord Ravenscroft in the interest of her mother. The excursion almost promised to be one of perilous pleasure to her. Perilous because it might serve to fan the flame she was striving to stifle. And although she resolved to look very serious, and to be as uninteresting a companion as possible, yet when she found herself seated on a high-mettled horse, whose every nerve was quivering with suppressed energy, her eyes brightened, her cheeks flushed, and her laugh rippled joyously.

"Let us set off before the carriage," said his Lordship.

"How pretty she is," said Lady Ravenscroft to Mrs. Maddocks, as Mary cantered off.

"Your Ladyship is very good!" But the speaker would have preferred changing places with her daughter to hearing her admired in the carriage. Conscious that it was necessary to appear pleased she made herself as agreeable as possible to her companion; but nothing seemed to interest Lady Ravenscroft so much as asking questions about Mary. Where she was educated. How she was educated. What her tastes were, &c.

"What does all this mean?" thought Mrs. Maddocks. "I know some ladies who seek to entertain their friends by squeezing them as if they were lemons to flavour their punch. I wonder if this is her Ladyship's weakness. At any rate, I will return the compliment." In half an hour she succeeded without any apparent effort in gleanng a concise history of the Ravenscroft family. Of the old knight, the founder of the race. Of the old lord who gambled and lost nearly all the property, together with brief notices of the different members, male and female, who had succeeded between them in exhausting the seven cardinal sins; nor were the saints omitted, who, after enjoying all that this world could afford them, had by judicious repentance made sure of eternal bliss into the bargain. Then the oak woods were admired, several fine views praised, and a suggestion offered as to the great effect that would be gained if certain trees were felled. A short interval was accorded to modes of millinery, and for the time both ladies forgot every thing else in the world. Meanwhile the carriage had passed through the grounds, had rolled some miles on the turnpike road, had entered the lodge gates, and had regained the shelter of the Deepdene Woods—when both ladies gave a scream of horror as two riderless horses swept by them at full gallop.

"My child! My child!" exclaimed Mrs. Maddocks, wringing her hands. "Oh, what has hap-

pened? Drive on—drive on—for the love of heaven, drive on!”

Thus urged, the coachman gave his horses the reins, and they started off at a pace that made Lady Ravenscroft grasp her companion’s arm on one side, and the door of the carriage on the other; but though her fear was great, her anxiety was greater still, so the poor timid creature bit her lips and prayed.

Mary had always found Lord Ravenscroft agreeable, amusing, and intelligent; but she had never noticed such an evident desire to please as he exhibited in his manner during their ride. He conversed with an absence of restraint that could not fail to draw her out, and without being aware of it, she was chatting as easily and unreservedly as if they had known each other for years.

“Keep your hand down, Miss Maddocks, and don’t touch him with the curb.”

“But he’s so fresh!”

“Ah, you should manage him as you do our sex.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Control him, without making him feel he has a bit in his mouth.”

“I am not quite sure,” said Mary, smiling, “that we can manage you gentlemen on any terms, much less in the easy way you describe.”

“As yet you are hardly conscious of your strength; but the time will come when you may rejoice in using it. ‘Why,’ said I to a lady, a married relative

of mine, a lovely woman by the way, 'Why do you flirt? surely, you can't care for all those men who hang round your skirts?'—'Care for them?' said she, with curling lip and flashing eye—'No! but it is such fun to see them making fools of themselves.'"

"I should not think she could be a very happy woman!"

"I fear not. At least I think she might have been happier. Deep down in her soul I fancy she cherishes the memory of some intenser love, than that she pledged at the altar."

"Ought she not to forget it though?"

"I believe," said his Lordship, seriously, "that a true woman never knows but one real love. She possesses one reality, Miss Maddocks; all the rest are mere images, copies, reflections of the original. Like a palimpsest, however closely the last inscription may be written, traces of the first characters can be seen through all subsequent writing."

Mary was growing uneasy; she had forgotten her "role." In her agitation she pulled the curb sharply and her horse reared.

"So, oh! Champion. So, oh!," cried his Lordship. "Ride him on the snaffle only!"

Mary began to grow nervous, and again jerked the bridle; the horse threw himself forward and plunged violently. Still she kept her seat unshaken, but the animal was pulling her arms off.

"I can't hold him, my Lord!"

Lord Ravenscroft touched his horse's flank with his heels, the creature sprang forward, and his rider made a grasp at Champion's rein. Anticipating the attempt, the horse dashed forward at full speed.

"Keep him in the road, Miss Maddocks, and we'll stop him before he gets to the top of the next hill; and mind keep your seat whatever happens."

A runaway horse is an amusing object to look at when its rider is a man. The utter helplessness of the equestrian, his frantic efforts to save his hat, the wild way it bangs about his head, if it hangs loose by a string. His streaming hair, the sudden desire of the cravat to turn round, as if the gold pin was afraid to face the danger; and if the horseman happens to have on unstrapped trousers, they too share the general panic, and try to shrink up to the waist-band, giving every little boy an opportunity to inspect the gentleman's calves, enabling also the most observant juveniles to see if the poor fellow wears whiskers on his legs. Should the incident occur in a wood the interest of the event is doubled to those spectators of a tragic turn of mind, since the chances are that the rider's head or knees must be smashed before a hundred yards are passed.

When Champion became possessed of the evil one and galloped off with Mary Maddocks, Lord Ravenscroft would have given all his estate to have seen her safe on the ground. As good wishes, how-

ever, would not stop the horse, he bethought himself how he could best preserve the young girl from an accident. The road made a grand sweep at this spot. To the right was a ride, as a space cut for shooting in a cover is called. Through this he turned his horse at the top of his speed, leaped three or four ditches without hesitation, which in cooler blood he would have looked at twice, and gained the main road a hundred yards in advance of the runaway.

"If I can but catch the rein!"

Holding in his horse till Champion had almost reached him, and taking care to avoid a cannon, he let him go, just as the head of the former reached his knee. On both horses flew for a few score yards, and then, as the runaway gained on him, he caught the bridle in his left hand.

To guide two horses at full speed is no easy task; but to pull up two is twice as difficult, since you have only half your power to stop your own, and the other you can only pull sideways.

Evidently Mary was exhausted and would soon lose her seat.

"Hold on by the saddle, Miss Maddocks, and let his head go to me!"

Mary obeyed; and Champion feeling the pressure of the bit on the off-side only, swerved to the right and deposited his rider in the ditch.

Lord Ravenscroft thought no more of the horses,

and jumping off raised Mary, who was insensible. Was she stunned, or had she fainted? Had she escaped injury, or was she seriously hurt? She had fallen at the foot of an oak, and perhaps had come in severe contact with it.

He lifted her tenderly on the bank, took off her hat, sprinkled some water in her face, and looked as helpless as a man generally is when he is the sole attendant on an unconscious lady.

Presently the wheels of the carriage were heard approaching, and in a few minutes his mother and Mrs. Maddocks were kneeling beside the young girl.

"It's only a fainting fit," said her Ladyship, who produced a smelling-bottle, and assisted Mrs. Maddocks in unfastening her daughter's habit. In a little time Mary opened her eyes, and soon was able to assure her friends that she was unhurt. Yet when she attempted to walk to the carriage she would have fallen, had not Lord Ravenscroft caught her in his arms and lifted her in.

"I'll drive home," said his Lordship to the coachman. "You go and look after those horses."

Mary insisted on appearing at dinner; afterwards she was made to lie on the sofa, and Lord Ravenscroft devoted himself to her nearly all the evening.

"This is an exquisitely painful position," thought Mary, as she saw her mother's eyes wander every now and then in her direction; but her glance was

not directed to her alone. Summoning up all her courage, she affected a degree of languor far greater than she experienced ; but as Lord Ravenscroft felt himself to be the cause of her accident, this conduct only succeeded in securing his attentions.

"Poor child!" said her Ladyship, approaching the sofa, and laying her hand affectionately on Mary's forehead. "I fear she is more hurt than she will allow."

Not a word or sign was lost on Mrs. Maddocks.

"Have I been deceiving myself? Is it Mary he loves after all?"

A sickening sensation stole over her. Was her child to supplant her in the affections of the man she loved? Was the aim of her life to be foiled just in the moment of its fruition by her own daughter? Were Mary and she to be henceforth rivals?

It was no easy task to wear a cheerful countenance during the remainder of that evening, and it was a vast relief when Mary expressed a wish to retire, and she accompanied her to her bed-room.

"Shall I sleep with you to-night, dear!"

"Oh, thanks, no! I only want rest. Evans has had a bed made up in the dressing-room, and if I want anything I will call her! Good night, darling!"

Mrs. Maddocks retired to her room, telling her maid not to wait for her, as she was going to sit up.

When the girl's footsteps died away along the corridor, and she felt herself to be alone, she threw herself on her knees beside the bed and burst into tears—hot silent tears that seemed to scald her cheeks as they flowed.

"He loves her! he loves her!" she repeated a dozen times.

"Oh! I could have been so happy with him; he is so kind, so unselfish, so careful of the feelings of others. And must I give him up?"

Long she wrestled with herself; all the evil in her nature struggled for the mastery; she could control Mary's actions, she could thwart Lord Ravenscroft's wishes, she could fly to the continent,—in short she could make herself and her daughter miserable for life. When the very bitterness of the disappointment became less intense, or rather when she grew more familiar with the idea of her discovery, her natural strength of character began to reassert itself, and she felt able to reason. The balance of her understanding thus restored, her better feelings came into play, and the force of maternal love, for a time overborne by the torrent of self-regard, welled to the surface.

Was not Mary the idol of her heart? Was she not her sister, confidante as well as child? Had they not hitherto had every thought and wish in common? Could she then be true to Mary, and yet seek her own ends? Impossible!

Midnight passed, and still she wrestled with herself. The moon drew near the west, and still she struggled. It was such a terrible sacrifice to give up such joy, such love, such power. Jupiter rose in the east, the night was passing, and with the night the darkness rolled as a cloud off her spirit, and she lay down to sleep, calm, victorious, almost happy.

"I don't think I shall go down-stairs to-day, Harriette," said Mary next morning.

"You shall breakfast in bed, dear, and come down to lunch."

"I don't think I'm equal to it."

Mrs. Maddocks knew better. Mary remained down stairs the rest of the day, dressed for dinner, and in the evening played and sang, though evidently with an effort.

Lord Ravenscroft seemed in poor spirits, and tried to play the part of the pleasant host with only partial success.

Every one seemed glad when ten o'clock came. After breakfast next morning the Maddocks left.

"What do you think of my friends?" said his Lordship, as he walked into the flower-garden with his mother.

"I think I shall call them my friends also. As for the elder lady she is a marvel."

"And her daughter?"

"Is a sweet and very pretty girl! You don't

forget your promise, George? Old mothers have often keen eyes."

"I don't think I shall ever marry."

Lady Ravenscroft looked at her son. His face was not lit up with that devotion which she would have read as meaning, "While I have you to love, I care for no other." But his expression was very sad.

"What is the matter, dear?"

"Mary Maddocks has refused me!"

"*Refused you*, George!" the old lady almost screamed. "She must be mad! Oh! why did I ask them here! I felt no good would come of it."

"You asked them here to please me, and I am very grateful for your kindness."

"My poor boy, I am so grieved for you."

Then she kissed her son, just as if he were still a child.

When the Maddocks reached the Hall, Mary said she felt very poorly and would like to lie down.

Mrs. Maddocks sat beside her daughter's bed, holding her hand. For some time neither spoke. At length Mrs. Maddocks referred to their late visit, and said how much she esteemed Lord Ravenscroft.

Mary drew her hand away, and pressed it on her forehead.

"Does your head ache, darling?"

"No, thank you."

"What ails you, my child?—tell me."

"Oh! Harriette!"

"Well, sweet one?"

"I—I—have refused him!"

Then Mary flung her arms round her mother's neck and sobbed like an infant. After a little time she whispered, "And don't you love him, too, Harriette?"

"Only as a friend. Or I could love him more as a son-in-law."

"Bless you, dearest!" murmured Mary.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Howden Park, Sept. —, 18—.

"MY DEAR MRS. MADDOCKS,

"Prejudiced as you are against me, I feel it would be useless were I to ask for an interview with you; but as I have to communicate intelligence of the greatest importance I cannot wait for your consent, and therefore I shall do myself the pleasure to call on you this afternoon. Nothing will be gained by refusing to see me, therefore I shall expect to find you at home at three o'clock.

"I am faithfully yours,

"A. JONES."

Mrs. Maddocks read and re-read this letter with mingled feelings of disgust and fear. Why was this man forcing himself upon her, unless he had some unhappy tidings to announce? What evil message could he be the bearer of?—she was not in his power. Should he be denied entrance?

Although she longed to avoid him, her heart told her it would be wiser to face her foe: better that he should declare his tactics than work against her secretly.

Accordingly she desired the servant to show Mr. Jones into the drawing-room when he called.

Punctual to his appointment, the Member for Arlerigge made his appearance, and received the coldest of cold greetings from the Lady of Surdon Hall.

Unabashed by his reception, he seated himself on a chair near to the sofa on which Mrs. Maddocks sat.

Placing a hand on each knee he for some time contemplated the pattern of the carpet, and then slowly raising his eyes he looked Mrs. Maddocks calmly in the face. Although his gaze was steady, it was perfectly respectful; it rather manifested timidity than boldness, as if he shrunk from some self-imposed task.

"How to unfold my message to you, Mrs. Maddocks, in acceptable terms, passes my comprehension, but truth and the interests of friendship compel me to break silence."

Here he paused again; but Mrs. Maddocks, well knowing that silence is a power surpassing speech in difficult moments, wisely held her tongue.

Seeing that he was not going to receive help from his companion, he thus continued:—

"At the conclusion of our last interview you threw down the gauntlet, and I must do you the justice to say that you have left no effort untried to effect my ruin. You have surrounded me with spies."

"I!"

"Yes! you, madam! Let us avoid irritating questions, however."

"Before you go any farther, sir, I beg you will either withdraw or substantiate your statement."

"Anything for peace."

"That answer won't suffice for me, sir!"

"Perhaps, then, I have done you an injustice. You had no parcels to send to St. Olaff's, and you have no friends interested in the science of geology?"

"I disdain to reply to any insinuations. Make any specific charge, and I will meet it."

"I have none to make! Nevertheless, you will admit that you defied me, and that defiance has not called forth any overt act on my part."

"What has brought you here this morning?"

"I come as your preserver!"

Mrs. Maddocks could not restrain a scornful laugh.

"The Eternal Powers know that I only desire to keep you from evil."

"I cannot hear this impertinence. If you have only come here to insult me, you had better leave the room before you are turned out."

"I implore you, Mrs. Maddocks, to restrain those bitter speeches, and give me a patient audience. I have but one ambition left, one cherished hope unfulfilled, and it rests with you to make my life com-

plete. I know well how deeply I have injured you, I know how vain it would be now to protest that through all the changes of my eventful life I never lost sight of the hope that our younger lives might outlast those of our seniors."

"I really cannot hear any more of this degrading stuff. May I request you will leave me?"

"Not yet. I will, however, spare you any circumlocution, and place the facts I have to communicate briefly before you; but firstly you must answer one or two questions. Is there any thing that I can do which would soften your harsh opinion of me?"

"Nothing."

"If I were to tell you that your possession of your estates rested with me?"

"It would make no difference."

"If it remained with me, and with me only, to preserve you from shame?"

"Thank God, my honour is not in your keeping!"

"Reflect for a moment. Suppose, only suppose, that I could shield you from disgrace, or permit you to fall into a slough. What price would you give me for such service?"

"It is forbidden to make any compact with the evil one."

Jones's eye flashed, his lip quivered. "Oh," he said, "how closely passionate love and deadly hatred

are united ! Yet I earnestly desire to serve you, although the medicine may be nauseous. You cannot marry Lord Ravenscroft, Mrs. Maddocks."

The lady dared not trust herself to speak. Jones repeated the sentence. Mrs. Maddocks moved to the bell.

"Not yet, not yet!" said he. "I have not finished. I have tried to please you, tried to show you that you are as ever the object of my passionate love, that I am ready to dedicate the rest of my life and all my wealth to your service. That whereas the rest of the world, remembering your origin, and envying your success, fawn and look coldly on you by turns; yet I, knowing all, still entertain no dearer thought than that of devotion to your real happiness. I had purposed remaining silent until that poor creature whom you know, had ceased to be an incubus; also, until I had some opportunity of winning your regard; but I have been hurried into action, first by your machinations against myself, which you cannot deny, and secondly because of your projected marriage with Lord Ravenscroft; and this last step involves such portentous consequences that I am bound to speak."

Jones waited for some time in the expectation that Mrs. Maddocks would venture to reply, but she deigned not to address him again; and, seeing that she sat motionless and apparently inattentive, he sank his voice to a whisper, saying, "I am bound to

“speak, though I thereby put myself temporarily in your power. I am your lawful husband.”

Mrs. Maddocks sprang from the sofa with a short sharp cry of pain. “It is false! It is false!”

Jones shook his head. “It is as true as that the sun is shining on Fort Mendip. I know I told you years ago it was an illegal marriage, because had you claimed me as your husband in those days my career in life would have been cut short at once. You may justly charge me with being guilty of a cruel deception, and subsequently of crime. I have no apology to offer. You may expose me if you choose, if you elect to expose yourself also. I make no defence; I am at your mercy. It is right though that I should tell you that ever since the Squire’s death I have had your movements watched; and had you at any time before now contemplated marriage, I would have declared the truth, and saved you, as I do now, from unconscious guilt. Your conduct of late has defeated my tactics. I thought to approach you as a friend; and when I should be free from the burden of that poor creature who bears my name, I hoped to rekindle the love you once entertained for me, and have thus saved myself the humiliation and you the pain of this confession. Your open and secret enmity has driven me to the extremity of unmasking my own wickedness. You fancied because I married you under the name of Anne Sawyer that the act was illegal and void.

The devil persuaded me to tell you so once, and then you not only believed me, but saved me from disgrace and ruin at the expense of your own name. Think you because I was base enough to profit by your generous act that I was unable to appreciate your wondrous devotion? Oh, no! I loved you then, I love you now, and there is no power while life lasts which shall deprive me of you! I have confessed my sin. I repent fervently. Help me to lead that new life which you alone can secure for me."

Mrs. Maddocks could only say in a faint voice, "Leave me! leave me!"

"If you will hereafter consent to my proposal."

"Never!"

"Don't drive me to extremes. I can both save you or destroy you."

Mrs. Maddocks rose and quietly left the room. Jones waited some time, then rang the bell, ordered his horse round, and departed.

Mrs. Maddocks gained her bedroom, and threw herself on the bed, clasping her forehead with both hands. "Oh, my head! it is on fire! Oh, God, that I may retain my reason!"

After some hours of feverish tossing she drew up a hypothetical case, in which the particulars of her marriage with Jones were set forth, which she forwarded to her solicitors for their opinion.

In due time she was informed that such a marriage

as she described, though irregular, was binding on the parties.

Thus at one blow her life was rendered desolate; and vengeance became her deity.

Amid the terrible mental conflict which ensued, imperiling the health of her body and mind, there was one, and only one, consolatory remembrance—that she had relinquished her expectations of a coronet while it was an act of self-denial. This reflection suggested a train of mind which (measurably at least) diverted her mind from dwelling exclusively on her own miserable lot. Should Jones carry out his threat, Mary would suffer as well as herself; and if Lord Ravenscroft desired to renew his attentions, would he not be deterred from doing so when the family mystery became known? At present her enemy's hands were tied; as long as his pseudo-wife lived he could not injure her. In the interim she must find out some method to crush or silence him.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Thus spake Zorobabel. O ye men, it is not the great king, nor the multitude of men, neither is it wine that excelleth; who is it then that ruleth them, or hath the lordship over them? Are they not women? Women have borne the king, and all the people that rule by sea and land. Yea: and if men have gathered together gold and silver, or any other goodly thing, do they not love a woman which is comely in favour and beauty? And letting all these things go, do they not gape, and even with open mouth fix their eyes fast on her; and have not all men more love for her than unto silver or gold, or any goodly thing whatsoever? A man leaveth his own father that brought him up, and his own country, and cleaveth unto his wife. He sticketh not to spend his life with his wife, and remembereth neither father, nor mother, nor country. By this also ye must know that women have dominion over you; do ye not labour and toil, and give and bring all to the woman? Yea: a man taketh his sword and goeth his way to rob and steal; to sail upon the sea and upon rivers, and looketh upon a lion, and goeth in the darkness; and when he hath stolen, spoiled, and robbed, he bringeth it to his love. Wherefore a man loveth his wife better than father or mother. Yea: many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become servants for their sakes. Many also have *perished*, have erred, and *sinned* for women."—ESDRAS.

THESE, or very similar reflections, occupied Mr. Jones's mind as he rode home. "Win her openly I

cannot; but when I loose my arrows, and one by one her fine friends leave her until none remain, then I will declare my fidelity, and she will be mine."

How this good man prepared and launched his bolts will presently be seen.

On his return home he picked a quarrel with the footman, and turned him out of the house that night. The housekeeper and housemaid were also dismissed next morning on some frivolous pretence. Thus did he get rid of those servants with whom he most frequently came in contact.

Alarmed at this exodus the butler expressed a hope that he too was not going to be turned off.

"Oh no, Mason. I never part with those servants on whose fidelity I can rely. By the way, are you better? You were poorly the other day."

"Thank you, sir, I am not very well, but able to do my work."

"I am glad to hear it. What o'clock is it?"

"Ten, sir."

"Pack up my portmanteau and your own clothes. I want you to accompany me to Bath."

"To Bath, sir?"

"Yes."

"When do we start, sir?"

"This afternoon. We shall sleep at Gloucester to-night."

Jones occupied the whole of the day in writing

letters and arranging papers, a great many of which he packed up to take with him.

That night he and Mason slept at the Old Bell. As they continued their journey the ensuing day, the following conversation took place in the railway carriage, master and servant both travelling first class.

"You have been with me some time, Mason?"

"Five years, sir."

"I think you might have found a worse situation."

"No doubt, sir. You have been very kind to me."

"Would you do me an important service?"

"If it were in my power, sir, provided nothing—em—nothing—em—out of the way would be required."

"Certainly not; I should be the last person to ask you to perform an unrighteous act for my sake. All I want you to do is to change places with me for a few days. I expect a person to call at Howden Park on disagreeable business in a day or two, and I wish to be out of the way. All that you will have to do will be to refer him to my solicitor, and declare you know nothing of the subject to which he will refer. It will be a very innocent deception, but it will save me vast trouble; and if you play your part properly I will give you one hundred pounds directly I return."

"I'm afraid, sir, the servants would recognize me."

"Not at all. You will plead indisposition and remain in bed for a week; by that time you will have gained sufficient confidence to act your new character easily. Besides, you shall engage a footman and housemaid before you return."

"Very well, sir; I'm ready to do as you wish."

"That's right. We'll change clothes when we get to the inn."

Jones said he was in delicate health, and required a bed-room for his servant adjoining his.

This arrangement was easily made; and, as soon as they were left alone, the change of attire was effected.

Mason could not forbear smiling when he surveyed himself in the glass; he was so like his master that he almost doubted his own identity.

"Now, sir," said the pseudo-servant, "I want you to consult a physician. I have been uneasy about you for some weeks."

Mason of course consented; and, hiring a fly, Jones mounted on the box, and ordered the driver to put them down at Doctor Emery's.

The physician was at home. He examined the invalid, shook his head, and wrote a prescription. "You must refrain from violent exercise, sir, and you must regulate your diet very carefully. I have no doubt in a short time you will be a good deal better."

In the course of the evening the doctor was again disturbed by a call from his new patient's servant; who, after a profusion of apologies, said he had been a confidential servant of Mr. Jones's for many years, that he was very anxious about his master, and he should like to hear the truth, as Mr. Jones, to his certain knowledge, had not settled his affairs.

Doctor Emery shook his head.

"Master was talking last week of insuring his life, would it be well to have it done?"

"If it were possible," said the Doctor.

"What d'ye mean, sir? My poor master isn't in any danger I hope?"

"If your master has not settled his affairs (I really don't know if I'm justified in making the observation to you), I should say he would do well not to defer the task."

"Thank you, sir. You may be sure I will be discreet.—It's just as I thought," said Jones, "his life is not worth a day's purchase."

He waited on Mason at dinner, who acted his part very cleverly and unaffectedly. In the evening he wrote the following letter, which he made Mason copy.

"HONORED SIR,

"Bath, August —, 18—.

"This is to inform you that I am a good deal worse than when I left the Park, and I shall not be able to return to my duties as I promised next week. I mean to go down to Bristol

to-morrow to go into the Infirmary; and as soon as I get admission I will write and let you know what the doctors say of my case.

"I remain, honored Sir,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"To A. Jones, Esq.,

"SAMUEL MASON."

"Howden Park."

The next step was to hire a footman. Mason playing master, and stipulating that the man should go down with him into Arcady on the second day following.

"If," said Jones, when they were alone, "you travel by the parliamentary train, you will reach the Park at dusk, when you had better get to bed immediately, where, as I before said, you must remain till you get accustomed to your position; but I hope I may be able to relieve you in six or eight days at farthest. I cannot be certain though as to a day."

Mason, attended by the new servant, following his master's directions, arrived at the Park, with a handkerchief to his mouth, and apparently scarcely able to speak from hoarseness and loss of voice. He gave out that Mason was taken ill at Bath, and feeling very poorly himself he at once retired to his room, where there was no chance of cook and the two other female servants seeing him.

During the day-time he sat in the dressing-room, attended only by the footman he had hired. Being really unwell, he ventured to send for a medical man, a stranger to Jones and himself.

When the letter he had written in Bath arrived, he spoke of Mason's continued illness, and announced his intention of engaging another butler. He also sent directions to the cook to hire a housemaid, and made the footman insert an advertisement for a housekeeper in the local paper.

No one in the house suspected that a hoax was being played upstairs, and Mason smiled as he thought how easily people may be deceived.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE day after her interview with Jones, Mrs. Maddocks summoned Wilkins to the Hall, when he related to her the whole narrative of his proceedings, except the accident to his wig. In conclusion he said, "as an honest man, I must express my fear that our farther progress in this inquiry is scarcely hopeful. I imagine Mr. Jones's suspicions are excited, and his asking me to inspect the magazine was just as much as to say you may as well search for the philosopher's stone as for evidence to incriminate me in smuggling. The farther we are removed from London the more remote seems our chance of success."

Mrs. Maddocks replied that her own opinions were unchanged. What had become of Gally? He had had a fair wind ever since he left the Thames, and yet he had not turned up. She had daily perused the 'Shipping Gazette,' but there was no trace of his having put in anywhere.

"Well, ma'am, is there any way of getting at his

papers short of committing a burglary? I confess I cannot suggest a plan."

"You say he has a safe in his bedroom. If that key could be got hold of, he would be unable to destroy his papers. On the arrival of Gally we would give information to the coast-guard here and to the Custom-house in London. The search would be made simultaneously at the wharf, the shop, at the quarry, on board Gally's vessel, and at Howden Park; and the result would be victory."

"But suppose, madam, that Mr. Jones has already destroyed or removed the papers we want. What then?"

"I don't believe he has done so; but should your anticipation prove correct, we will see if money won't open somebody's lips."

"Very good, ma'am; yet we are still a long way off from the main point. How are we to get that key?"

"You say his rooms are *en suite* and on the ground-floor: can't you enter them? I am willing to pay for such a service."

"It cannot be bought, ma'am," was the grave answer.

"I thought as much; but what man can't do, woman may accomplish. Do you know Mr. Jones's wife?"

"I believe I am to see her to-morrow or the next day."

"Dear me, how's that?"

"I think I told you, ma'am, the good people at Sandcombe have taken me for a quack doctor, and this poor creature, half-dead with cancer, called during my absence, to beg me to undertake her cure. It seems she has a mania for medical advice, and especially leans towards quackery."

"Poor thing! let me tell you her story."

Mrs. Maddocks briefly narrated the circumstances with which the reader is acquainted, and finished the little history by saying, "She must hate her husband with all the energy of a passionate and vindictive nature. Either for the sake of gratifying her malice or in the hope of propitiating you to use your skill in her behalf, she can be bent to our ends. Should she be willing to serve you, she will carry out whatever she undertakes to do: if she refuses her help, let me know, and I will provide a substitute. Good morning!"

"What a woman that is!" thought Wilkins. "I wish I could find her ditto."

On Wilkins's return to the Jolly Sailor that evening, he found the parlour full of the usual *habitués*, and it being now his aim to appear in the character of a quack, he led the conversation to the subject of disease, and related stories of wonderful cures, performed by a mysterious individual whom he declined to name; although the dullest understood that he referred to himself. "Money," he went on to say,

"is no object to me, but when I work I must be paid. But praised be Galen and Hippocrates! Paracelsus and Tycho Brahe! I do know one herb from another, and the last-named old gentleman taught me under what stars to gather them. — Good night, gentlemen."

The general impression left on the minds of the auditors was that Mr. Wilkins was a non-such, and all were disposed to think highly of the skill they had never tested.

Mrs. Jones did not appear next morning: noon passed, and she did not arrive. Wilkins retired to his room to write letters, as he said; to smoke a pipe, as it proved. About one o'clock he remembered he had not ordered dinner, and descended to the kitchen for that purpose.

"Mrs. Williams, do you think it best for my health that I should fast to-day? Because if that's your prescription, I won't take it."

"Dear me, no sir! what would you please to like, sir?"

"Well, I think I've tried all the varieties of bacon and eggs and eggs and bacon—and eggs without bacon and bacon without eggs—I therefore think we can suggest no other arrangement of your stable bill of fare; and although I have the greatest possible respect for your pigs and entertain a high regard for your poultry, so much so that I would be the last person to hurt their feelings, yet if it should please

fate that I never have anything more to do with those delicacies I should be resigned, Mrs. Williams, for such is the nature of my philosophy."

"La! bless you, sir, I don't understand a word o' what you're saying!"

"Have you a rabbit?"

"Yes, sir."

"And a lobster?"

"As many as you please."

"Then, Mrs. Williams, at three o'clock I'll see if they will suit my complaint."

During this colloquy a woman was seated in a stooping position in the corner of the settle. As soon as the dialogue ceased, she rose and whispered some words in the landlady's ear, to which she answered, "Indeed, I'm feared it's no use."

"Oh! do you now, Mrs. Williams?"

"Please, sir," said she, addressing her visitor, "this is Mrs. Jones as I spoke to you about. If you would be so good as to look at her 'brist.'"

"Really you know," replied the Doctor, "as I said before I say again, I'm out for a holiday, and if once I begin to heal the people I shan't be able to move."

"I'll pay you honest, Doctor; indeed I will, if you would be so kind."

"I'm not afraid of that, my good woman; but when I begin a thing I like to see the end of it, and I shall soon be going home."

After a good deal of entreaty on one side, and feigned reluctance on the other, Wilkins consented to examine the wound. He had taken the precaution to provide himself at a chemist's in Arlerigge with some of the usual remedies; but he knew that the products of Apothecaries' Hall were held in small estimation in Arcady compared with the rubbish commonly used by empirics, therefore in addition to his drugs he learnt the names of one or two herbs that might be usefully employed in a poultice, such as mallows, dogsfennel, and crowsfoot.

He had often heard of the filthy remedies commonly employed in country places in the cure of various diseases; but his imagination never conceived such a loathsome sight as that displayed by the sufferer when she removed her bandages.

He was just able to ejaculate, "Wash the part clean in warm water, and I'll see you in an hour!" when he rushed out into the open air as sick as a landsman in a gale of wind.

A second inspection told him that the unhappy woman was beyond the reach of pills or plaisters. All that the highest skill could do would be only to mitigate her sufferings.

"Put on a poultice of figs boiled in milk, and see me again to-morrow morning, when I will get something ready for you; and you must also take this medicine to-night," handing her an anodyne draught. He then went out in search of the herbs he needed,

and subsequently prepared them in the mysterious retirement of his own rooms.

The poor sufferer called next day, and the smile of faint hope flitted about the corners of her mouth. Her terrible pangs were more bearable; she had slept, thanks to the opiate. If such wonders could be effected in a single night, what might such a man not do?

Wilkins directed his attention solely to relieve his patient's sufferings, and, compared with the state in which he found her, he was able to give her ease.

The wound dressed, and her numerous thanks paid, he led her to speak of herself. It was the theme ever present, ever on her lips. Language could not convey her detestation of the man who had robbed her of her money, who had deserted her, and while he was playing the grand gentleman obliged her to live on a pound a-week. The sharpness of her tongue was all that remained of the buxom farmer's wife we once knew; her frame was bent and shrunken, her face wan, her features pinched and livid with pain.

Wilkins sympathized with her; said that he thought she could compel her husband to allow her a larger income, and then dismissed her. After she left he debated with himself what course he should pursue with this grass-widow. Would she be more likely to assist him for his own sake in gratitude for his medical skill, or could he persuade her to further

his views on the pretence that he could promote her pecuniary interest thereby? A little reflection showed him that she was too shrewd to undertake any risk on the latter supposition. If she could be pressed into the service at all, it would be on the score of hatred to Jones, and as a condition of the continuance of Wilkins's skill. "I'm only afraid," he said to himself, "that our acquaintance is too recent: but time will not permit of longer delay."

Accordingly when Mrs. Jones returned in the evening, he broached the subject.

"How d'ye suppose your husband made his money?"

"I can't tell; it came over the devil's back somehow."

"After all said and done, I dare say now you would'nt hurt the hair of his head!"

"No, very likely not!" said Mrs. Jones, scornfully. "What would you do I should like to know, if you seed the beggar you set a-horseback riding by and not so much as throwing you a penny? Wouldn't you like to tie a rope across the road agen he come back at night, and stop by it till his horse and hisself went tumblin' over it? Ay, that I should! I tell you, Doctor, he drawed out marriage-settlements all right and proper, and then he persuaded me as we would sign 'em after we was married, and so he did; and then after a bit, when he wanted the money, he laughed in my face, and said the skins might do for

glue, but they was good for nothing else. D'ye think it's nothing to be left alone in the world, in torment night and day, with nobody to say as much as God bless you! for when the money went my son never come near me agin, and he had took to drink."

Here she paused and burst out crying.

"Not hurt a hair of his head!" she cried passionately; "if I saw him in the middle of the pit, and if the liftin' of my little finger could save him, I'd let him stop there."

"It's a funny chance that brought us together. Your husband is keeping a large sum of money from me this moment." Wilkins alluded to the reward he should get if he conducted his search to a successful issue. "But I can't get sixpence from him."

"Nor you won't if he can help it!"

"I believe you; but I mean to get it in spite of him."

"Never!" said Mrs. Jones, shaking her head. "I knows him too well."

Wilkins paused for a few minutes, and then turning abruptly to his patient, said:

"I've done you some service, and will do you more. Will you help me to get my right if I show you how?"

"Indeed, Doctor, I'm too sorry (feeble) to do anything."

"But suppose if I cure you in the end?"

The prospect was too remote. Mrs. Jones shook her head.

"Then suppose if I say I will leave you to die in a week?"

"Oh! Doctor, honey! for the Lord's sake, don't say that!"

"Very well then, I am ready to make a bargain with you. If you will do what I ask, I will attend to you for nothing till you're well."

The poor wretch groaned, and said in a low voice, "What is it?"

"I want the key of your husband's iron safe. The safe is let into the wall at the head of his bed."

"How in the world can I get at it? I don't know where it's kept; and if I did, I can't get into the house, leave alone his bedroom. If it's to be got, why don't you get it yourself?"

"Because if I were caught, I should be punished, but if you were found in his room all that he could do would be to turn you out; in fact, as no legal separation has taken place between you, you have a right to be there."

"But I don't know the key if I should see it."

"Quite true; and what is more you won't know where to look for it, because in all probability it is locked up in his desk or in some safe place; but wherever this place is, the bunch of private keys which he carries in his trousers' pocket will do for me as well as the key of the safe. Mind, I don't want to

rob him; all that I desire to do is to prevent him from getting at his papers the day after to-morrow, at the time I shall put the law in force. If you will help me, I will tell how it can be done."

"Let me hear first."

"To-morrow evening I will go with you to his house and ask to see him as your solicitor. He will certainly say No. While I'm talking to the servant, you must go to the side-door, which you can open from the outside by turning the handle; I went in that way the other day. Immediately opposite is the room he calls his study, where there are plenty of hiding-places either behind the furniture or beneath the sofa. This room opens into his dressing-room, and that again into his bedroom, all on the ground-floor. You will know by the stillness of the house when you can safely move; then, when you've finished the job, come back to the study, open the window gently, and I'll be outside to help you down."

"Indeed, Doctor, I canna do it. I'm too sorry; and if he was to wake he'd kill me, for sartain."

"I didn't think you were afraid. I thought the woman that could bear the pain you have endured could do anything, and in helping me you would be only doing right."

"Ah! Doctor, I'm afeer'd there's no Scriptur for it."

"Of course there is; wasn't Jael blessed above all

the women of Israel for slaying Sisera? Wasn't Rahab's life spared because she hid the spies? O yes, there's plenty of Scripture for it; and I'll give you proper medicine to take, that will keep your heart good; besides, as I said before, you have a right to be in the house."

Mrs. Jones groaned aloud. Conflicting emotions swayed her to and fro. Revenge prompted her to consent. Timidity made her shrink from the enterprise; but a stronger plea was found in Wilkins's behalf in that deep yearning for life, which seemed to be in his gift.

"I'll come, Doctor; I'll come. God help me!"

At the appointed time on the ensuing evening Mrs. Jones and her friend met near the lodge-gate of the main entrance to Howden Park.

When they reached the hall-door Mrs. Jones slipped round the angle of the house and waited till she heard Wilkins in conversation with the footman.

"Master is ill in bed, sir."

"Then give him my compliments, and ask him if he will see me to-morrow morning."

The message was brought to Mason, who, remembering his instructions, believed Wilkins was the person his master referred to.

"Ask him to call to-morrow afternoon, when I will make an effort to see him."

The servant returned with this answer. Meanwhile Mrs. Jones secreted herself in the study.

Perhaps it was the exertion, perhaps the excitement, or a combination of both, or it might have been the new plaister, but as she lay hidden under the couch her sufferings were scarcely bearable.

When night closed the footman came in and shut the shutters, and went through into the dressing-room, where he did the same. Then everything grew perfectly quiet, and no sound disturbed the oppressive silence for more than an hour.

Mrs. Jones began to feel secure, and applied herself to the mixture in her pocket, which savoured a good deal of brandy; at any rate it burnt her throat, but at the same time it soothed her nerves.

At last she heard through the open door the voice of the footman, asking if his master wanted anything more. The answer did not reach her, but the man closed the door, and went out through the dressing-room into the corridor.

So far all was well; but it was too soon to move, except to make her position a little more comfortable, and to try the effect of another dose of the draught.

Her lids became very heavy, she rubbed them, she turned herself round; sleep, however, was too powerful for her, and she became unconscious.

When she awoke the room was still dark, and then fear came upon her. She got up, groped to the window, clambered on a chair, and unfastened the shutters; peeping through the crack, she saw the

first symptoms of the dawn. She listened—there was not a sound anywhere. Draining the bottle, she got down from the chair and cautiously stepped into the next room, and listened at her husband's bed-room door. Not a sound could be heard.

“Suppose he'll wake!”

Again she listened; nothing broke the silence.

She knew that at that hour most persons in health sleep soundly, but an invalid might at any moment awake. She tried the door; the handle turned easily. She opened it gently, the well made hinges did not creak; the die was cast; she stood within the apartment, where a night-light faintly flickered. In the stillness of that room, where she felt herself to be victorious as her enemy lay helplessly at her mercy, the woman woke in her, and she relented.

Had she not loved him? wasn't he her handsome husband? why should she do the bidding of a stranger? She would take some trifle from the room to prove to him her forbearance at a future day, and return without the coveted keys. She took up a scent-bottle and put it in her pocket, and as she was about leaving, the thought came over her that she must see him—must look at the once dear face again. She stole to his bedside, but all the bed was in shadow; she lifted up the night-light, and the faint flame fell on his face. “How quiet he is, and how pale he is; poor fellow, he must be very sick!” She put the light down, and stretched out her hand to

touch him in obedience to an irresistible impulse. The coldness of his forehead thrilled through her; she laid her finger on his cheek, it was like ice—on his lips, they were stiff. Again she raised the night-light, lifted the bed-clothes—it was no delusion—he was dead! Uttering a low moan she threw herself across the corpse. The violent exertion ruptured an artery, the walls of which disease had partly eaten away. It was only a brief pang, and she too lay lifeless.

The *post mortem* examination ordered by the coroner proved that the supposititious Mr. Jones had died of heart-disease. There was no mystery as to the cause of his wife's death, but how she came there, or what was the object of her visit no one could imagine.

The identity of Mr. Jones's body was not questioned, and in due time it received appropriate funeral honours.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"St. Olaf's, Sept. —, 18—.

"MY DEAR ARTHUR,

"The last week has been prolific in strange events.

"On Saturday morning, the footman on entering your friend Mr. Jones's bedroom found him dead, and his wife stretched a corpse across the bed. Heart disease was the cause of his death, and the rupture of an artery in a deep-seated wound terminated the life of his unhappy wife. All sorts of strange rumours are afloat as to the motive which induced the poor woman to seek this last interview; a scent bottle taken from the chimney-piece was found in her pocket, but as there was a purse containing several pounds lying on the table near the bed untouched, it seems probable that robbery was not her object. The most feasible theory is that she effected an entrance through the side door, concealed herself in the dressing-room with the intention of persuading her husband to grant her a more liberal allowance, and made her way into his room when she would be sure of an uninterrupted interview. Her sudden appearance probably so startled him that death ensued; and the horror and excitement producing some violent physical effort on the part of his wife, caused the rupture which killed her. The doctors say that under any circumstances she could not have lived many weeks longer.

"I trust you find your work congenial; but I cannot help regretting that you have lost one of the best partridge seasons I ever remember. Tom Harris and myself bagged last Tuesday,

in four hours' shooting, twenty-three and a half brace of birds, one landrail, and three hares. (The writer forgot to state that eighteen brace fell to his friend's gun.)

"Some busybodies are talking of repairing the cathedral. Such nonsense! It would be far better to build and endow other churches with the money the restoration would cost. I confess I have no tin to spare for architectural tomfoolery! If I remember right, this is a subject we never could agree on.

"You will be sorry to hear that I lost three Aylesbury ducks last week; stolen from the Dean's Meadow. Almost sacrilege, I say.

"Your very attached father,

"E. A.

It will be seen from the tenor of this letter that Mr. Jones's sudden death had caused no small sensation in Arcady. The Arlerigge electors were desolate, and mourned their loss in cups of beer and speculations as to the coming man. The Arlerigge 'Banner' waved a noble tribute to the memory of the departed, concluding its article with the novel Shakesperian motto—"He was a man—take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again."

No person, though, was so much affected by this event as Mrs. Maddocks. At once all her plotting was at an end, and her most dreaded troubles finished.

Having resolved to relinquish her hopes of becoming Lady Ravenscroft in favour of her daughter, she yielded no half allegiance to the cause she had espoused; and fearful as was the thought of dragging into light the early chapters of her history, she

dreaded still more the consequence which such a revelation might have on Mary's prospects.

Common, yet weary trials, heavy burdens borne to the end, rarely elevate or purify the soul. Fathers and mothers looking back on their wanderings see every rock, and can trace every shallow current and eddy through or over which they have succeeded in steering. Safely anchored in a quiet roadstead, they criticise all who are coming after them, and complacently watch the constant wrecks occurring everywhere, little heeding those that perish, except that they serve by contrast to magnify their success.

"Father," says a son, "I cannot live on thirty shillings a week. My office hours leave me no time for recreation or for study, and the daily grind of endless work renders my life miserable."

"Nonsense, my boy ; I lived on fifty pounds a year, and never knew a holiday but Christmas days and Sundays from the day I was fourteen until I was twenty-three, and if you wish to be a man you must not take your shoulder from the wheel."

The father thinks of his victory and almost forgets the strife ; though it would be wiser to remember how he groaned in spirit in those young days, and that it would be more merciful to loosen the yoke which he was once scarcely able to sustain. If the young man triumphs, he too becomes ultimately crystallized into the same hard form which once seemed so unloveable.

"Mother, mother! I cannot marry him," pleads the young girl with tearful eyes.

"We are poor, darling, and he is rich. Once I didn't care for your father; but I grew to like him. It is not necessary to be in love with your future husband. When you are married you will become fond of him, take my word for it."

Oh! Poverty, Poverty! parent of meanness, prolific mother of ignoble deeds! How thou rearest thy gaunt form between our lives and happiness, terrifying with thy hideous look and bony fingers all meek souls and feeble spirits! The strong and pure may defy thee; but common minds, that cannot soar or struggle, know that thou art a curse—as terrible as hell. From out the hideous chambers of thy dwelling-place stalk crimes of every form and guise—from the mean petty theft and paltry knavish trick—the seeds of future villany—to the dark train of sins that find their expiation in gaols, on scaffolds, or in the secret horrors of remorse. He who escapes thy snare, and fails (the power being given) to save his offspring from thy clutch, is guilty of their sins.

"Should I," thought Mrs. Maddocks, "fail to take warning from my own experience, and let any mean or unworthy motive interpose between my child and her happiness, as far as I can promote it, I should be responsible for any evil that might befall her in after years. I would not drive a wedge between the

destinies of any two beings who truly love each other, not for a king's ransom."

These opinions of Mrs. Maddocks might be attributed to a defective education. The mind as well as the shoulders of young people should be straightened with a back-board, and trained to grow in proper form. The wild vine twines round any tree; and though its clusters are pretty and its festoons graceful, the grapes are invariably sour. In the Westerwork hot-houses the rich muscat and luscious frontignac ripen on vines trained in straight lines beneath the glass; so should young folks grow and live by rules of actual measurement, scouting the principle of natural selection in work, and above all in love.

Strange to say, since Mrs. Maddocks relinquished her ambitious dream, seeking another's happiness before her own, she felt a peace and satisfaction so deep and so intense that she began to fancy heaven must consist in loving others, not ourselves. Mary, conscious that her mother had no thought so dear as her child's peace, reproached herself that she could not emulate such abnegation of self. But then, poor child, she was to be pitied, seeing that she had made the effort, until her waxen wings, on which she tried to soar into the realms of indifference, melted in the sun of love.

It was the evening of the day on which the news of Jones's death had reached them, that they were

sitting at the window looking out at Fort Mendip, on whose woods the burning fingers of autumn were closing. Mrs. Maddocks was thinking of the worthlessness of all her quondam friend's schemes, and, choosing his career for a theme, indulged herself in a little harmless moralizing.

The thread of her unheard discourse was suddenly broken by Mary asking, "Don't you think him handsome?"

"Who, dear?"

"Oh! you know whom I mean!"

"I think he is more than nice looking."

"I wonder will he call again to-day?"

"Hardly to-day; it is getting late."

"Don't you think it is unkind of him not to come in? It is such formal work calling, making inquiries, and leaving a card."

"What can you expect after your treatment of him?"

"Oh, Harriette! you can't reproach me; you know why I did it."

"Yes, yes, dear!"

Mary was sitting with one hand resting on her mother's clasped fingers. The latter smiled and kissed her child.

Child—not young lady then!—clinging for support and finding the tender sympathy she sought. How the young lady would have revived in her, had she known that her mother had desired the servant to

say, the next time Lord Ravenscroft called, she wished to see him.

Just at this moment a horse's feet were heard on the gravel. Mary could not resist rushing to the window, but instantly drew back pale and trembling, saying, "It is he!"

While she sat silent and expectant, listening to catch the sound of his horse's hoofs retreating, the door was thrown open, and the servant announced "Lord Ravenscroft!"

"I thought," said Mrs. Maddocks, rising to meet him, "you must have supposed some infectious disease pervaded this house. You have treated us as if we were in quarantine."

"Have I been rude?" said his Lordship. "Sometimes the line is so narrow between officiousness and inattention it is difficult to know on which side you stand."

"Those who are friends interpret every action of each other kindly, my Lord."

"Then I claim to be judged by your standard."

"Ah, you have caught me," said Mrs. Maddocks; and then, bowing with mock gravity, "it is pleasant to accept even defeat at your hands."

"Don't attempt to fence with him, Harriette, he is too adroit; he knows how to forge weapons out of our weakness to wound us."

"I proclaim a truce," said Mrs. Maddocks, laughing. "Come, my lord, you shall sit down on equal

terms, neither of us confessing to defeat. Now you have been riding about the world, and we have been playing the part of two forlorn ladies. What great events are moving Arcadian minds?"

"Nothing but poor Jones's death, of which, of course, you have heard?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Maddocks, in a serious tone.

"It was awfully sudden," said Mary.

"Neither the sadness nor suddenness of the event are thought of, but the mystery in which the poor man's affairs are involved. He appears to have been only a huge bubble. Nearly all his property is mortgaged; the majority of the incumbrances are of late date. I fancy he must have been speculating; and, as far as this world is concerned, he seems to have died at the right time. Moreover, he has made no will, and the number of claimants as heirs-at-law are legion; the nearest of kin as yet discovered is only some third or fourth cousin, so the lawyers will have their share of the spoil."

Little did his Lordship dream how interesting these particulars were to the elder lady; but, living or dead, Jones's name was a spell to awaken her fears; and, while she sat calmly listening, she was thinking, could any possible combination of circumstances implicate her in the enquiry which was being so zealously conducted?

"I have promised to return to dinner," said his Lordship, "and therefore I must say good night."

"Please give my kind regards to her Ladyship, said Mrs. Maddocks, "and say I hope to call on her as soon as Mary is equal to carriage exercise."

"How cold and formal he is," thought Mary; "how very different he is to-night from his kind impressive manner at Deepdene."

Mrs. Maddocks, who seemed to divine her daughter's thoughts, said, "When sensible men and good talkers condescend to mere gossip, either they think meanly of the capacity of their auditors, or else they desire to avoid some topic which sits close to their heart." Then she added, smilingly, "Do you think Lord Ravenscroft thinks either of us fools?"

"I must say, Harriette, you are a most comforting companion."

Nevertheless Mary sighed.

CHAPTER XXV.

SEPTEMBER was drawing to an end. Many Arcadian corn-fields still shimmered in the moonlight; many a farmer's yearly income was still at the mercy of the elements, when all the harvest at the Grange was secured, except one small patch of spring wheat, which would also be in the "haggard" before October's gales should howl round the coast.

"Weather permitting, we shall have our harvest-home supper, on the twenty-ninth," said Marston to Lucy.

"That's the day after to-morrow."

"Don't take all the preparations on yourself; let some of the women help you."

"Oh, I am quite equal to the task."

Marston left the house, and walked to the field, where the men were piling up the heavy sheaves on the carts.

"I don't know what's the matter with her," soliloquised Marston; "but Lucy has changed very much of late. She used to be so cheerful and light-

hearted. Now she moves about noiselessly, and grows thinner and paler every day. I fear she works too hard. I must not let her over-exert herself in future."

The daily cares and responsibilities of his position were generally sufficient to occupy Marston's thoughts; but the state of Lucy's health was evidently a cause for anxiety: nor did he think of anything else until he saw a man placing some damaged sheaves of corn that had grown near the hedge in the cart with the sound grain.

"How can you be so careless, Richards? You are not only injuring yourself but your associates, and in damaging their property you are guilty of an offence. Why won't you fear the eye of the Almighty? When I am near and observing you you generally take care to avoid giving cause for censure. Yet you dread not the glance of Him who never slumbereth or sleepeth."

The man shrunk back abashed.

After Marston had seen that there were no idlers on the Grange, he set out to invite some of the neighbouring farmers and their families to the harvest supper.

The first house he entered was occupied by a widow, who successfully managed a large dairy, but whose knowledge was limited to the special duties of her calling.

Marston entered the open door without knocking,

and walked directly into the kitchen, where, much to his surprise, he found Mrs. Adams seated by the fire wringing her hands and rocking her body to and fro.

"What is the matter, my good neighbour? what is the matter?"

"He didn't meant to do't; but thare, he did it, and Stevin's gone baayle for'n for two hunderd pounds."

"Gone bail for whom, and for what?"

"Oh, hav'nt you heerd? Tommy, my son-in-law, was drivin' a load o' lime, and Billy Jenkins was drivin' some bastes along the road, and hollered to'n to stop 'em back, and Tommy turned about and cracked his whip agin the steers, and when he looked round, there the fore-horse had knocked a babby as was playin' in the road—knocked 'n as stiff as a red herrin'."

"Dear me! Dear me! I am very sorry to hear it!"

"Ay, but 'tis hanging for killing babbies."

"Not if it was an accident."

"Ay, ay, and the Crowner 's holdin' the 'quest to-daay: and Stevin, my poor boy Stevin—Stevin's a steady man—he's gone baayle for two hundred pounds, and if Tommy isn't thare Stevin must be hung or paaye the money."

"No, no; nonsense, Mrs. Adams; you are troubling yourself unnecessarily."

"But 'tis hanging for killing babbies, and steady man, Stevin, my poor boy—he is a good boy—he is gone baayle, and where's the money to come from, or else they'll hang Stevin."

Marston perceived that it was no use to argue the point. Mrs. Adams had persuaded herself that going bail was equivalent to becoming a substitute, and that her son must be mulct in money or life, and in the bitterness of the moment she scarcely knew which she could spare with least suffering, her steady son or her hard-won savings.

Before any idea suggested itself to Marston, in rushed Stephen; and Mrs. Adams, seeing that his life was spared, naturally concluded that her money was sacrificed.

"What's to paaye, Stevin? What's to paaye?"

"Nothing, mother."

"Nothing to paaye; and killed the babby!"

"No, mother!" (*alto* key).

"What! killed the babby and nothin' to paaye?"

"No, mother!" (*altissimo*).

"Dear me! Dear me! Killing babbies is hanging, and there's nobody hung, and nothin' to paaye. Dear me, dear me! I'll go and turn them cheese this minute."

"Before you go, Mrs. Adams, let me deliver my message. Will you and all your family come to our harvest-home the day after to-morrow, in the evening at six o'clock?"

"Much obleeged to ye, Mr. Marston; we'll be all very glad." Her mind, however, was not quite free from the effects of the late cloud, so that she added in a half-whisper, "Only think now, killed the babby and nothin' to paaye!"

Marston made the circuit of four or five farm-houses, and found, as he expected, that all he asked were ready to come: and, as every invitation embraced a household, he soon engaged as many guests as the great barn would hold.

The long-looked-for evening arrived: two tables were placed the whole length of the barn, on which an abundance of cold meat, poultry, pies, and puddings, testified to the liberality of the donors of the feast.

Some of the guests whispered to each other that 'twas all a show off of Marston's; but these good-natured people did not forget to exhibit their appetites, suggesting by their voracity that they had come prepared with store room.

There were wreaths of flowers and evergreens; there were texts and banners; there was tea for the women and beer for the men.

When the selected singers, led by Marston, sung the grace, the farmers and their families stared.

"La!" said some, *sotto voce*, "Marston never was altogether the round shilling."

Yet in spite of criticism and some small admixture of envy, good humour abounded; and as Marston

stood at the top of the room watching the joyous eager faces which owed all their light and happiness to him, he felt that already he had reaped his reward.

Glee and solo singing followed the feasting, and then reels and country dances occupied all the young, and many of the older people.

All the young folks? No; Lucy Lockwood declined to dance. She was too tired, she said; and when the would-be partners looked at her pale face, and remembered how much labour the entertainment had cost her individually, they could not but admit the plea.

"You're worn out, my child," said Marston, seating himself on the form beside the young girl, and laying his hand tenderly on her shoulder.

Lucy looked up and smiled; but she would have preferred at that moment any other form of expression than that used by her old friend. True, he had been more than a father to her: but hers was more than filial affection with which she repaid his love, although she hardly dared confess the truth to herself.

Marston never suspected that his *protégée* entertained for him other than sisterly devotion. He knew that Lucy anticipated his every wish: he was himself conscious that he would make any sacrifice to promote her happiness: but he had long since merged himself in his Associates. Apart from them and their success he had no thought; the great idea

of his life, now realized in part, was all that wife could be to him. But, were it otherwise, he had no love to bestow on Lucy or any other woman, except that affection already given. Once he had shot a fair arrow at a fair mark, but the shaft curved in its flight, and, coming back like a boomerang, wounded him who sent it forth. He had ceased to mourn over that old disappointment; he had put that phase of life behind him; the past was as a sealed book; when by chance memory recalled old days, he rose in the strength of a determined will and turned his thoughts in a different direction. He had through faith and prayer won the mastery over himself.

"I have been thinking, Lucy, that you must try change of air. You need rest, my dear. I will take lodgings for you at Sandcombe, and I have no doubt that sea-bathing will set you up for the winter."

"What right have I that the labours of others should be taxed by me?"

"Don't talk in that strain, dear; I will see to that."

"Ah, that's just the way. You are always thinking of others rather than yourself, and giving away all the labour of your life to help on your friends. Now, you can't work for ever, and unless you make some preparation for the future you may find that the younger generation will persuade themselves that you are a burden and ought to be got rid of."

"Don't do the young folks such injustice, dear; besides, do you think it likely that having been so marvellously helped by God all my life, he will

abandon me in my old age? No, never, Lucy; unless, indeed, there be some root of pride remaining in me which some fiery trial only can eradicate. You know I mean what I say when I state that Providence will provide all things needful for me. Indeed, so great are the riches of His bounty, and so complete my trust in Him, that if I were left a fortune to-morrow I should be miserable lest I might be tempted to rest on the thing sent instead of the sender. But, you naughty child, I see through your device: you think by raising a discussion you will sail away in the cloud and mist of words, while I shall forget all about my projects for you. If I live I will take lodgings for you next week: so make up your mind to yield gracefully."

Marston consulted his watch, and, finding eleven o'clock had arrived, he intimated to those around him that it was time to disperse.

Lights burnt later in the Grange that night than they had done since the last harvest home; but, although some of the younger people lay in bed till seven, the older hands were all stirring at daybreak. Farm work never ceases. Cows must be milked, butter must be made, and the live stock must be fed even if there should be death in the house; much less then can amusement be an excuse for delaying the duties which each day renews for the farmer. But the new day brought news which made the hearts of at least two people beat faster than they had done for many a month.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ONE of the hardest thoughts that chafed the mind of Lucy Lockwood was the oft-recurring question of her parentage. Marston knew her history; at least she fancied so. But whenever she threw out hints in that direction he turned the conversation, or maintained silence, from which she gathered that there was a cloud around her birth.

"How I should have loved my mother had I known her!" was her frequent thought, and often she would linger before the glass, wondering if her lineaments resembled the face of that unknown parent.

Her astonishment, then, was complete when a letter bearing the London post-mark was put into her hands, containing an enigmatical piece of advice, which ran thus:—

"If Mr. Marston does his duty, he will succeed in proving that you are the heir-at-law to a considerable property once belonging to your father. The writer will watch his proceedings, and will furnish information as it may be wanted.

(Signed)

"WELLWISHER."

As soon as Lucy read this strange epistle, she set out in search of Marston, whom she found in the turnip-field, and calling him aside put the note into his hand.

An expression of terrible pain passed over the reader's countenance. Lucy saw it, and wondered still more. Both of them turned in the direction of the house, and kept silence for some time. At last Marston, crushing the paper between his fingers, said,

"An enemy hath done this."

"An enemy?"

"Yes; an enemy of mine, of yours, and of that unhappy woman who brought you into the world."

"Then you know my mother?"

"I once knew her."

"Is she alive?"

"I believe so. But do not ask me any more questions just now. Let me tell you, Lucy, this letter has opened an old, old wound."

"There is one question which I must ask you; am I a relative of yours?"

"Not in the remotest degree."

Both remained silent for some time; but ere they reached the house, Lucy laid her hand on her friend's arm and said, "Do not think me very importunate, but for pity's sake tell me if you know why my mother deserted me."

"I have been informed, and I believe correctly,

that your mother was persuaded that you died in infancy. Indeed she was taken to the churchyard and shown your grave."

"Poor mother!" murmured Lucy.

Marston took his companion's hand within his own.

"I had hoped, dear, that I had in some degree supplied a parent's place, but I perceive there are ties of blood, which are spiritual ties in strength and intensity."

"Oh! don't think me ungrateful! You have been everything to me; but I should not love you the less even if I had a mother to love."

The rumours that had arisen in Arcady after Jones's death had floated as far as the Grange, though hitherto Marston had paid no attention to them. It was universally said that after every liability had been discharged, there would be a considerable sum of money to be distributed among the next of kin; but of course Lucy (as far as her history was known) had no claim to a shilling; therefore it was evident to Marston that the anonymous letter-writer must be some one who owed a grudge to Mrs. Maddocks, and sought to make Lucy the medium of his vengeance.

"He must be a coward and a rascal to boot, who thus aims at his mark behind a hedge. I will take care as far as I am able to thwart his designs." At this moment, and never so strongly for years, the memory of departed days came back to Marston with

painful vividness. Again he saw the bright-eyed country-girl in whose soul he perceived the existence of such wondrous possibilities, so many of which an evil destiny had blighted. It was a moment of intensely bitter thought, recollecting as he did then, how fate had denied him the one possession he coveted: the full and perfect love of a devoted woman. He pressed his hand against his forehead, and remained in reverie for some minutes. When he raised his eyes, Lucy was standing beside him, her eyes full of tears.

"I fear I have distressed you, my only friend!"

"No, dear; but I cannot conceal from you that this wicked letter has caused me much pain."

"Let us think no more about it."

Marston looked at the young girl, thinking, what wondrous self-control she possesses, and what a lovely spirit hers must be, to relinquish for the sake of my peace this most natural inquiry! "Thank you, Lucy;" he intended to say more, but words failed him.

As soon as a week rolled round, the subject which both had avoided, yet had constantly thought of, was again thrust upon their attention by another letter from "Wellwisher:"—

"I am surprised that you have taken no steps to recover the property you are entitled to. Ask your friend Marston to call on your mother, who will not deny that she was legally married to your father at Tedbury Church, on _____, under the name of Anne Sawyer, which name she assumed for the purpose of concealment."

This letter made Marston wretched, for the positive assertion even of a lie has nearly the force of truth until the answer is found.

"My opinion, Lucy, remains unchanged, that your correspondent is villanously attempting to defame an unfortunate woman through you. However it will be a satisfaction to both of us if I can quietly disprove his allegations."

"He adds a postscript that letters addressed to W., 101 Oxford Street, will reach him."

"I cannot understand the proceeding."

Tedbury Church was on the opposite side of Arcady from the Grange. Marston rose before day, and set off on horseback by starlight. At ten o'clock he reached his destination, and finding at a farmhouse stable-room for his nag, he proceeded to the cottage of the parish-clerk, whom he found to be at home.

"I want to examine the Register-Book; can you come with me to the vestry-room?"

"Ay, this minute, sir."

"How long have you been clerk?"

"Fifteen years."

"Who was your predecessor?"

"Eh?"

"Who was clerk before you?"

"Martin James."

"Is he alive?"

"La! bless you, no. He and his wife's bin dead this dozen years and more."

"Who's your present vicar?"

"Mr. Cross."

"How long has he had the living?"

"He only came into it two years ago."

Marston also ascertained by cross-examining his new acquaintance that since the period named in Wellwisher's letter, there had been two incumbents of Tedbury, and that at the time when the reputed marriage took place, the living was held by an absentee who had employed a succession of curates.

On examining the Register he was startled at finding several pages missing—torn out in fact—so that the public record of all the marriages in the parish for the year in question, and the subsequent one also, had ceased to exist; or at any rate were no longer in possession of the authorities.

As soon as his horse had rested, he set out on his homeward journey, his mind troubled with painful thought. Was this strange tale really true? Had that villain married her, or mocked her with a marriage? Somehow he felt convinced she must have been his victim. There was only one person who could now unravel the mystery. Should he apply to her? Of what avail would such an application be? Under any circumstances Mrs. Maddocks would feel compelled to deny it, and who could disprove her statement?

Perhaps he was a partial judge; at any rate the fixed idea in his mind was that Mrs. Maddocks had

been more sinned against than sinning. No! The story must be untrue! Jones could never have played such a double game. He was too shrewd a fellow to live all his life with a halter round his neck. Besides, what object could he have had in secretly marrying Sally Jennings? Such things never occurred in Arcady between a preacher and a peasant-girl. The one would be too cunning to have consented, and the latter too ignorant to have insisted on such an arrangement.

Poor Marston! How imperfectly had he measured the impulsive, reckless nature of his old rival, or the ambitious spirit of his former idol!

A priori judgments are often as futile as the verdict of the audience who hissed the pretended imitator of a sucking pig's cries as a poor impostor, until the performer lifted his cloak and exhibited the struggling animal. Even so do many critics denounce, as ridiculous and absurd, incidents, expressions and plots faithfully copied from real life.

On his return to the Grange he told Lucy that he had been unable to substantiate any portion of the unknown writer's statement. This half evasion of truth sat uneasily on his conscience, so he told the whole story of the torn Register, and laid the issue before her.

"You perceive, dear, that on the authority of an anonymous letter, we dare not attack the reputation of a lady who now occupies a good position in society.

It would be positively wicked to set afloat such a story unsupported by a single fact. If we could succeed, your chief object would be defeated, since the knowledge of your existence, so long unsuspected, could not be other than painful to your mother; but with such a claim as it is proposed you should set up, I think she would be justified in disputing your identity. I fear, Lucy, you must be content with my poor affection only."

Lucy tried to smile, but the tears were in her eyes.

"Do not yield to despondency, my dear; rather dwell upon the thought that even assuming you could substantiate every point of this strange tale, it would be at the price of your mother's mortification. You can only exhibit your filial affection by adopting in the fullest sense the doctrine of self-sacrifice. On earth I only can appreciate your conduct; but there are two other witnesses who will be satisfied:—your conscience and your Heavenly Father."

So completely had Marston obtained the mastery over her soul, so fervently did she desire to merit his approval, that Lucy with willingness and apparent cheerfulness complied with his advice. Still the pallor deepened on her cheek; still her languor and weakness increased, though she went about her duties as usual. At last the day came when the lodgings at Sandcombe were vacant, and amid much sympathy and many kindly words, the invalid mounted the tax-cart and was driven off by Marston.

Lucy had been offered a companion.

"No!" she said. She preferred being quite alone, except she hoped Marston would often pay her a visit.

"Of course I will come when I can, dear: but you know I cannot often leave home. You can write to me every day if you like, and when I have a spare moment I won't forget to reply."

Lucy could not help laughing.

"One would fancy I was going a thousand instead of ten miles from home. But then we have never been separated before."

"And I trust not for a very long time now."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER of Mr. Jones's arrows had fallen short ! Like other men who allow low motives to rule their conduct, he imagined everybody to act as he would himself have done.

A name and fortune are two acquisitions not frequently despised ; he would place both within Lucy Lockwood's reach, she would naturally grasp at them, and her success would be his vengeance.

Merely the operation of a natural law, no overt act of his. Nothing of the kind ; he would turn Queen's evidence in a sort of way, and having placed himself out of the power of injury, he would rejoice in secret at the accomplishment of his designs.

Ultimately Mrs. Maddocks might consent to his wishes. Whether she did or not he would prevent her from becoming Lady Ravenscroft.

Sometimes he asked himself, " Why not give her up ? there are plenty of women younger and as fair as she." " By Jove ! " he would reply, " I don't know them ; and then there would be the delight of vic-

tory, which is worth a good deal, especially as she has virtually driven me from the world."

Days passed, and no answer to his letters arrived. He began to be uneasy. He wrote again, but with the like result. "That knave Marston is too cunning to open his battery unless he is armed at all points, and I don't know what weapon I can place in his hands. Perhaps if the ball is opened by me he won't object to dance. I have it now; and, seizing pen and paper, he wrote,

“ TO PARISH CLERKS AND OTHERS.

“Twenty pounds reward will be given for the certificate (or true copy thereof) of the marriage of Albert Jones and Anne Sawyer, which was celebrated in the Parish Church of Tedbury, on . 18—.

“ Address to W. M. Hughes,

"101, Oxford Street."

“ Won't this puzzle the Arcadians ? ” thought he, as he enclosed the advertisement, together with a post-office order to pay for three insertions in the columns of the *Arlerigge Banner*.

Had Mr. Jones foreseen the consequences that ensued from this proceeding, peradventure he might have withheld his letter.

One of the first persons to read the advertisement was Mrs. Maddocks. With great difficulty she restrained a scream ; yet when the surprise was over she became perfectly composed, and, shutting herself in her room, looked the difficulty in the face.

"Who could have written it? and what was the writer's object?" were the two questions she had to consider. Hour after hour passed, and yet the mystery remained impenetrable. Had Jones been alive the difficulty would not have existed; but he was dead, and the old clerk was dead, and the clergyman who married them—what had become of him? He had left Arcady long ago—he must be traced. Immediately she wrote to Mr. Lipscombe to send Roberts down to the Hall.

Having thus decided on a course of action, her mind became relieved. On the third day Roberts arrived, received his instructions, and at once commenced the inquiry. Before five days elapsed he informed his employer that the Mr. Brock who served Tedbury Church in the year — subsequently removed to Ireland, County Mayo, where he had died nearly four years back.

Spirits do not usually write advertisements, and Mrs. Maddocks did not imagine that the laws of nature had been set aside out of dislike to her. Some one, however, had penned it. Who could it be? Had Jones made a confidant of some one? Hardly. He could scarcely trust himself, much less another, with such a secret. Suddenly it occurred to her that Jones's decease was a sham.

Roberts, who had been ordered to remain at Arle-
rigge, was again summoned.

"Do you perfectly remember the appearance of the late Mr. Jones?"

"Perfectly."

"If he were alive could you identify him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"How? What proof could you bring forward?"

"I observed two personal peculiarities. The little finger on his right hand was stiff, so much so that he could only partially close it; also several of his upper front teeth were false."

"Do you think it possible that Mr. Jones could be alive?"

"Not unless some one was buried instead of him. Stay, that reminds me the day I dined there I remarked a very strong likeness between his man Mason and himself; so much so that I mistook him for his master."

"Where is Mason now?"

"I can't tell."

"Then you must ascertain what has become of him."

Roberts could find a hundred persons ready to talk about the late M.P.'s history. But when he asked where Mason had gone no one could give him any information, until at last he heard from Jones's former housekeeper that the butler was in the Bristol Infirmary at the time of his master's decease, and, for aught she knew, was there still.

Roberts went to Bristol, and there learnt that no

man of that name had been either an outdoor or indoor patient at the time mentioned. The authorities were very clear on the point.

Mason's relatives lived at Usk in Monmouthshire. Embarking on board the steamer for Newport, before night closed Roberts had seen most of them. No one, however, had any tidings of the missing man. He was with Mr. Jones a short time previous to that gentleman's death; that was all they knew.

Returning next day to the Hall, Roberts reported himself to Mrs. Maddocks. "If I may venture to advise you, madam, I should recommend you to advertise in the *Times* as well as in the local papers."

As soon as the mail could deliver, and printers set up the advertisement, it was printed. Mason, if alive, was earnestly requested to communicate with a firm of London solicitors whom Roberts knew; and any person giving information as to the whereabouts, or being able to prove the death of the said individual, should be paid ten pounds.

"What further instructions have you for me now, ma'am?"

"Remain quietly in Arlerigge for a few days, until we see how this leaven takes effect. Keep your ears open, and if you ascertain anything relative to our enquiry let me know immediately."

The next few days were days of terrible suspense; the very air seemed fraught with mischief, her heart

was heavy with forebodings, but Mrs. Maddocks could turn to no one for sympathy or counsel. Neither was her mind satisfied that in pursuing this inquiry she would be likely to find her peace. Whither she was going she knew not, what she was to gain she could not tell; there was a mystery, and in that mystery her future was hidden; cost what it may, she would stand face to face with her enemies, even if she perished in the struggle. Neither was it to preserve herself alone: she fought for her own name and fame, for that position which she had won, and now was threatened to be deprived of; but above all, she fought for the happiness of her child, and that that child might not turn round some day and curse her.

"If," she argued, "Mary has to suffer disappointment and mortification, and the loss of him she loves, because I have been doubly the victim of that man, I shall lose her love, and be left alone in the world, without a creature to care for me, and my own child will long for my death. Then if I succeed in proving him to be alive, what will follow? Doubtless he has some good reason for disappearing; he has possibly committed some crime, some breach of the laws, which he fears will be shortly discovered. I think Arcady will be too hot to hold him if my suspicions prove correct. Whatever happens, I have the consolation of knowing that no one will believe any statement of his after the

manner in which (as I fancy) he has deceived the public."

These dark and troublous days were not altogether without light. The living of St. Olaff's Abbey became vacant, and Mrs. Maddocks had the pleasure of presenting it to Arthur Apsly.

It gave her no little gratification to be the means of conferring so much happiness on another. More than one heart beat faster than usual when the tidings spread through Arcady that Arthur was the fortunate recipient of this rare piece of preferment.

The men at the Arlerigge reading-room said that the "broken down beauty" had not lost the knack of pleasing the petticoats, although he had flattened his nose.

Young St. John said, "He'd have no objection to smash his smeller on the same terms."

A week passed away and no tidings of Mason arrived. People began to chatter. Who wanted him? Why was he wanted? Had he any information to give respecting the property? No one, however, shot an arrow near the mark.

Meantime he whom this inquiry most concerned had seen the advertisement: as he read it he turned pale, and drank a glass of strong brandy-and-water immediately.

"She's a clever woman; if I don't take care she'll checkmate me yet. I declare," he said, as the brandy warmed his blood, "if I could roll back the

past I would start with that woman as my wife. It was a false move when I let her go; all my success has been in spite of fate; with her I could have won the world—and—and saved my soul into the bargain. What a coward I was in those old days to shrink from the burden of supporting her, and what a fool not to have seen that such a wife would have been a staff in my hand and a light about my feet." In spite of himself, in moments of excitement he fell into the old scriptural mode of expressing himself as he was wont to do in earlier years.

"Ah, that's passed, and it's no use fretting; the time is come to play my last card, and play it I will."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE Maddocks had called at Deepdene, and both ladies fancied that her Ladyship was rather reserved. Perhaps she was unwell, perhaps her humour was naturally uncertain, they could not tell; but when they took leave she expressed no hope that they would call again. Lord Ravenscroft was from home; indeed Mary would not have gone to his house if she had not known he was in London. However much she loved, she would stoop to no act that could have the slightest resemblance to man-hunting. Her high resolve did not suffice to keep the colour on her cheek; and, in spite of constant efforts to be cheerful, she grew almost grave.

Her mother anxiously watched every symptom, and did not fail to reproach herself for the part she had played a few weeks previously. "If I had thought of Mary then how different everything would have been now!"

"If!" most tiresome of all words, intensely bitter, and yet without tonic properties whenever it is used in reference to the past.

"Where do you mean to spend the winter, Harriette?"

"At home, I presume."

"Oh, I am so tired of the Hall. Nobody comes there; we go out nowhere, we entertain no one. I hate the country. I can't ride to hounds, and —"

"You are tired of life, dearest."

"Just so. What have we to live for?"

"Each other, I suppose, dear."

"Oh, pardon me," said Mary, clasping her mother's hand. "I am so selfish. I forgot that you might complain of *ennui* as well as myself. Still, don't you think change would do both of us good? Suppose we were to winter in Rome. How delightful it would be."

"I cannot leave home just now, dear. Beside, I am tempted to ask, has Arcady no attractions for you?"

"Ah, don't revert to that. 'Twas only a dream; a very pleasant dream; but, if you won't go abroad, at least let us migrate to St. Helen's for a few days."

"You forget, dear, the equinoctial gales are now due, and we may be shut up for a fortnight without being able to communicate with the mainland."

"That's just what I should enjoy. I haven't witnessed a storm at sea, oh, not for years, and I should enjoy seeing the waves crushing themselves against the rocks."

Mrs. Maddocks reflected for a moment. How

would such an arrangement affect her plans? Except in the event of a long interruption of communication, it could not matter whether she resided at the Hall or at St. Helen's, and under any circumstances she was not prepared at present to go farther or faster in her investigations than the natural current of events required.

"When do you wish to go, dear?"

"To-morrow."

Mrs. Maddocks could not forbear smiling at her daughter's impetuosity. She smiled and was yet sad, because this longing for excitement was a sure indication of the unrest within, of the feverish longing for action, the desire to fly from the pressure of her own thoughts.

"Well, dear, you shall have your own way; but I prophesy you will soon get tired of the island at this season of the year."

The third day after Mrs. Maddocks and Mary arrived at St. Helen's. While they were seated at breakfast the latter said, "Isn't this the post day?"

"Yes. I desired our letters and papers might be brought over thrice a week."

"The boat will have some difficulty in crossing to-day."

"Not much; the fishermen are so accustomed to wild weather and rough water they won't think anything of this breeze."

In the afternoon the post arrived. One letter was

from the housekeeper at the Hall, who felt it her duty to inform her mistress

"As how a carriage drove up just before dark this evening, and a gentleman got out and asked if you was at home, ma'am. I said as you wasn't; and then he asked were you was, and I said at the Island. There was two other gentlemen in the carriage, but they didn't get out; the gentleman as got out said, as how his business was very partickler, and wanted to know when you'd be coming back. I said as I had no orders.

"Your dutiful,

"JANE MOORE."

This was a very perplexing piece of intelligence to Mrs. Maddocks. Who could they be? Not Lipscombe and Roberts surely. "My mind is not easy. I think we had better get home to-night. Mary, will you ring the bell? Are the boatmen in the kitchen?" asked Mrs. Maddocks of the servant.

"No, ma'am. They went back as fast as they could, as they expected it was coming on to blow."

"How stupid of them!"

"Shall I hoist the signal for them to return, ma'am?"

Just then a splatter of rain against the window caused Mary to exclaim, "Surely you're not thinking of crossing the Race in such weather?"

"I did think of it, I confess; at the same time I agree with you 'tis an unpleasant afternoon for a water-party. That will do, Allen."

The servant withdrew.

About five o'clock Mrs. Maddocks announced her intention of going for a walk.

"I'll come with you," said Mary.

"No, dear. I am not so susceptible of cold as you are, and a blow in the fresh air will do me good. My head aches a good deal."

"Don't stay out long."

"That depends on how I feel."

Mrs. Maddocks was anxious and troubled. Sitting in-doors was irksome, an hour's struggle in the wind would brace her nerves; and during her lonely walk she could think out some of the pressing trains of thought which perplexed her.

Hardly caring whither she went, she found herself on the top of the landing-place: and the very difficulty of maintaining her position without being obliged to descend the steps for shelter, was in itself an inducement to remain.

While she was thus struggling against the force of the wind she was surprised to see a four-oared gig coming round the nearest point to the south of the steps. The boat contained five men, all dressed alike in blue jerseys and red caps. After they passed the point the gig was steered directly for the spot beneath her feet, but when about two hundred yards from the shore she sheered off and passed out of sight along the coast.

"Some ship's boat, I suppose," said Mrs. Maddocks. "I wonder what they can be doing here!" There

was a fence to cross, and some rough ground to traverse before she could gain the edge of the cliff from which she could see down the Race. Was it worth the trouble? Yes, she would see what became of the boat.

Ladies' dresses are not suited for climbing even in fine weather—much less for getting over high stone fences, or rather dry walls, in half a gale of wind; but having resolved to make the effort, Mrs. Maddocks was not going to be beaten. Not she! So after some trouble she succeeded in her design, and in about ten minutes or a little more she was looking over the edge of the cliff, and looking in vain for the boat.

It was very strange; or else the next point of land had been passed, and that was scarcely possible.

After satisfying herself that nothing was to be seen, she turned her face to the cottage, and observing a gap in the fence she made for it: but just as she reached it she saw one of the red caps on the other side. She stopped; cried out, "Who are you?" For once her heart failed her; she moved on a few steps; her knees trembled. "Oh God!" she murmured. "It is he!" and fell fainting on the grass.

"This is better luck than I could have anticipated," said Jones. Springing through the gap, and lifting the senseless woman, he carried her towards the landing-place, where he had ordered the boat to wait for him

after he had landed on the rocks beneath where Mrs. Maddocks had just been standing.

"Nothing shall separate us now but death," said he to himself, as he carefully descended the steps with his burden, and laid her gently in the stern-sheets covering her with wrappers.

"Shove off, boys! Back water, bow! Give way, my bullies!" In an instant the brave boat shot out from the shore, her head turned to the south.

"How beautiful she is!" said Jones, sprinkling a little water on the face of his captive. "There's a new life before us in that far-off land." It was no time for sentiment; the wind was rising, the 'Thalassa' was on a lee shore. "Give way, my bullies! send her along!"

The seamen pulled with a will, every now and then casting wondering looks at the motionless body lying in the stern-sheets, with its beautiful though death-like face turned up to the heavens.

"By ——," muttered the bow oar to number two, "if my Nancy was no better pleased to come with me than this young woman, I'm blowed if I'd ask her to be a shipmate."

"Hold yer tongue, Tom!"

Skirting the shore to avoid the strength of the tide, they at last passed the land, and felt the full force of the sou'-west wind, which came sweeping up the channel. Jones looked out for the schooner; she

was not where he expected to see her; at last he caught sight of her some four miles dead to windward, and at anchor.

"By ——!" he swore; "what does he mean by coming to an anchor when I told him to lay to?"

"The tide's too hot, and the wind's too strong, and there's no sea-room for laying to," said the stroke.

"Then why didn't he keep her under weigh, the fool?"

"Two hands can't manage the old lass in this breeze," said the speaker.

Jones made no reply; but urged the crew to pull hard.

They had hardly got half-way to the schooner, when Mrs. Maddocks began to recover. Slowly consciousness returned, and when she perceived her position she gave a wild, piercing cry that made even the sailors start.

"O men! O men! take me back! take me back!"

"She's hysterical," said Jones, "after the effects of her swoon; she'll be better by-and-by!"

"She's d—— fond of you, I can see," muttered the bow-oar, as he turned his quid in his cheek.

Jones laid his hand on Mrs. Maddocks's shoulder. "Compose yourself, darling. You will see my conduct in a different light ere long. Who could or would risk as much for your love as I've done?"

"O men! if you have either mother, or sister, or wife, take me back for her sake. I'll pay you any money you like to ask."

"Hush! darling. I can't permit you to provoke a mutinous spirit in my men!"

Splash! splash! The oars rose and fell, the boat surged along through the water, every now and then dipping her nose into the seas, and sending a shower of spray into the stern-sheets. Mrs. Maddocks sat wringing her hands, helpless and hopeless. There was but one method of escape: that which would set her free from life as well.

Jones, in anticipation of such an attempt, managed to sit on a portion of his prisoner's dress, so when she found herself fastened, she remained passive until they neared the yacht. Then she again cried out, "Men! O men! have mercy on me! and preserve me from this wicked man. I'm rich; I'll pay you a fortune each of you if you'll put me ashore!"

No answer was vouchsafed to this appeal, and she despaired of rescue.

As the gig swung in alongside the yacht, rising and falling with the heavy sea, Jones was obliged to jump up and put out his hand to fend off. No sooner did Mrs. Maddocks find herself at liberty than she sprung on the thwart with the design of throwing herself overboard; but the man who pulled stroke seized her dress and held her fast; while Jones, taking her in one arm, grasped the man-ropes with

his right hand and carried her up the companion-ladder (it was but three steps).

"Welcome," he cried, "on board the 'Thalassa!'" as he put her down. "The night-air is cold; will you come below? You will find your maid waiting for you."

Mrs. Maddocks held on to the brass stanchions, and refused to move.

"Pray let me show you your cabin!"

"Will no one save me? or throw me into the sea? Is there no man here with a man's heart, to fight a woman's battle?"

"I say, Fred," said Tom, "blowed if I likes this here job. I thought as she was ready to sign articles—but, d—— it, she don't want to go to sea."

"Come, come, Mrs. Maddocks," said Jones, "I can't allow you to express yourself in this way, and must urge you to go below." Seeing that entreaties and expostulations were vain, he attempted to remove her by force, when her screams made even old Gallait shiver, and two or three of the crew gathered round.

"What do you want here, you blackguards? Forrard with you! d'ye hear?—forrard! Slip her anchor, Gallait, and get under weigh at once. Never mind me and this lady."

"Forrard, there!" shouted Gallait. "Let's try her anchare!" Not a man moved.

Jones seized a belaying pin. "The first man who refuses to obey orders, I'll brain him!"

"We didn't ship as kidnappers," said Tom.

Down came Jones's arm, but the sailor caught it by the wrist, and twisted it till the fingers were obliged to loose their hold, and the belaying pin rolled on the deck.

Mrs. Maddocks, seeing that she had made an impression on the sailors, redoubled her entreaties and promises of bounty.

"Gallait!" shouted Jones, "take this lady below! then I'll see who will disobey me."

"I nevare approve of dis job. I think bettare send de lady ashore."

"Are you, too, against me?"

"No, I for you. You are against your own selef!"

This mutiny was a contingency Jones never dreamt of; he couldn't understand it; but so it was. Meanwhile the gale was rising, and it was time to be off.

The foresail and mainsail were still set: but they must now be lowered and reefed. The orders were given, and at last the men reluctantly obeyed, save Tom, who swore he'd stick by the lady if the ship sunk. Mrs. Maddocks implored him not to leave her, and letting go her hold of the stanchion, she seized the seaman's arm instead.

The safety of the vessel and crew were now at stake, and Jones, after throwing a cloak round his

captive, also set to work like one of the crew. "Down with the foresail! Get number three jib ready;" but before these orders could be carried out the storm had set in in earnest.

"Late the other anchare go!" screamed Gallait.

"What d'ye mean, sir? We can beat her out of this."

"Under a try-sail and storm-jib!" said Gallait, sarcastically.

"Certainly!"

"Nevare!"

By this time the second anchor was down, and sixty fathoms of chain paid out.

"All this comes of disobeying orders," said Jones.

"All dis comes ob stealing womens," said Gallait.

"None of your impudence, sir!"

"Fool!"

Evidently the distance between master and servant was very narrow. Perhaps the question really was, which was master?

The sails were furled, the topmasts sent down, more chain paid out; but the schooner pitched fearfully, the green water coming often abaft the foremast. The hatches were battened down, but the steward managed to hand up a can of grog and some biscuit, and Tom made his companion sip a small portion of brandy.

As the night passed on, the wind rose higher and higher, and it was proposed to cut away the masts, as

the vessel was drifting in-shore. Jones opposed this measure as long as he dared ; but Gallait took the responsibility upon himself, and the tall spars were soon floating astern of the schooner, now a helpless hulk, rolling in the waters and surging against the chains that held her as if she were a maddened wild beast.

When the danger grew imminent, Mrs. Maddocks said to her companion, " You can leave me now ; I'm safe as long as the storm lasts and the vessel floats. You will see when I want help, and then, for the love of heaven, stand by me ! "

Mrs. Maddocks was seated behind the companion, wrapped in a sail, a rope round her waist fastened to a ring-bolt prevented her from being washed over-board.

Except when a gleam of lightning flashed out, the darkness was simply blackness impenetrable and very awful. The vessel rolled and pitched and took so much water on board that more than once the crew thought she must founder, for when the heavy seas came over her she trembled as if in fear. Yet the heart of that lonely woman did not fail her ; a light breeze and a starlight night would have been death, the tempest was the voice of a friend.

Jones managed to get beside her ; she did not fear him then !

" It was an ill day for me when I first played you false ! "

Mrs. Maddocks vouchsafed no answer.

"Now the very elements conspire to avenge you; unconsciously you have lured me to destruction. Could you have forgiven me, there would have been a glorious future in store for us."

No answer.

"You have set spies about me; you have sought my humiliation and disgrace, and only because I have been true to the last trace of goodness in my nature. Many would hate you; but still the dearest thought of my mind is the memory of those early days."

Something like a laugh burst from the listener's lips; but the wind made nearly every sound save its own voice inaudible.

"Can you not forgive me?"

"Yes! If the tempest does its work!"

From that moment she was left alone till the day broke.

Watching an opportunity the steward managed to get below and return with provisions and spirits, of which all hands partook. Jones succeeded in getting to Mrs. Maddocks with a life-buoy, which he passed over her head and fastened so that it could not slip.

"It's my last gift," said he, a strange smile playing round his mouth. "You may yet live to thank me for it."

It was no time for words; death stared all of them in the face. The gale raged furiously, the schooner had dragged her anchors, and was within

two miles of the shore; at any moment the chains might snap, and then there would be but little hope of escape for any one.

Strange to say, the gig-boat which had never been hoisted in, still floated buoyantly, in some measure sheltered by the ship's stern, and now that light had dawned, the eyes of the crew were turned to this frail craft as a means of escape. There was a narrow inlet in the cliff, at the upper end of which at half-tide there would be a strip of beach. All on board knew of it. It was high-water at seven o'clock; at ten the attempt might be made; it was already nine o'clock. When the hour arrived, some of the men moved aft.

"Vare are you going?" screamed Gallait.

"To heaven!" roared Jones.

"G—— forbid!" exclaimed one of the crew, to whom the idea of drowning under any circumstances was disagreeable.

Tom got near enough to Mrs. Maddocks to say,

"If your ladyship 'll come wi' us, we'll do our best to take care of ye."

"No! no!" said Mrs. Maddocks.

All hands save Jones and Gallait got to the taffrail.

"Fools!" said the latter; "vy von't ye live as long as ye shall?"

Fear had taken hold of the men, and go they would. In a few minutes five of them were drifting in-shore. The place which they desired to gain was

half a mile to the southward, so instead of keeping the boat dead before the sea, trusting to the tide to drag them down, they edged her away, and were soon carried to leeward of their haven. Then the death-struggle commenced, when they strove to keep their position; still the tide dragged them down, their course became more and more oblique, until at last a sea caught the gig under her quarter, and capsized her. One man got on her as she swam bottom upwards, but he only was floated out to sea to be drowned in turn.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHEN the night just past closed there was a rumour in the little village of Sandcombe that a schooner had been seen at anchor inside the Bell Rock just before dark. As soon as the day broke there were several persons on the cliffs looking out for "lame ducks," and any wreck that might be floating towards the coast; these all saw the dismasted vessel, and the intelligence soon spread that she must either founder, or come ashore shortly.

Among others who heard the rumour was Marston, who had been paying Lucy Lockwood a visit, and hastily snatching a slice of bread and cheese to be eaten on the road, he set out for the scene of the expected wreck.

The rain mingled with the spray that came in showers over the high land, and floated in clouds of mist across the fields, at times concealed everything from view; but during moments when the veil was lifted, the low black hull of the vessel could be distinctly seen some two miles off. At times the sea

ran so high, and so completely shut her out, that more than one person exclaimed, she's gone!—she's gone down, indeed! Then she would rise higher than ever on the top of some huge sea, again to disappear in the valley between those rolling hills.

Marston sent men back to the village for cart ropes, and for materials to make a fire and boil coffee. If they should come ashore, it would be best to be prepared to render the poor things every assistance. If they didn't, no harm would be done by being ready.

As the day rolled on the schooner dragged nearer in; then came the episode of the boat; and when Marston saw they had cast off, he knew that there was little to do but to pray for their souls. One moment five strong men were struggling for life, but for a moment only; and save the one who floated off to die a few minutes later, they had entered the prison of the great deep.

"It's a terrible sight!" said Marston, closing his eyes, since he knew he could give no help.

Nearer came the schooner, still holding on to her anchors, drifting some scores of fathoms, then bringing up only to drift again.

"I can see three people on board," said one of the bystanders; "and one of them is a woman." Presently the companion opened for a moment, and another woman appeared; but before a rope could be made fast to her a sea swept her overboard. The

men thought they heard her screams above the roar of the wind.

Marston, accompanied by several men, now descended the cliffs, standing just above the wash of the water. A cart rope was tied round his waist, and two others volunteered to follow his example. At last, about a hundred yards from the shore, an hour before high water, the vessel struck, and the sea made a clean breach over her. The water had now receded to the foot of the rocks, except when the breakers rushed in; it would ebb some distance yet, but not sufficiently to leave the wreck dry.

"If she will only hold together till the flood makes," said Marston, "I think there will be less sea on. Already I fancy it doesn't blow quite so hard."

Marston was right in one respect: the gale had broken, but many a long hour must pass before that sea would let a boat live. At Sandcombe, as in hundreds of places round our coast even now, there was neither lifeboat nor mortar apparatus. All that men could do in open boats the fishermen were ready to attempt; and many a time had they embarked to render assistance, when old salts trembled as they saw them start. But in the present instance there was nothing to be done.

The ebb finished, the flood began, and with it the breakers rose higher; surge after surge the hissing hills of foaming water rolled in upon and swept over

the wreck; then the spectators discovered, as the vessel did not lift, that her bottom must have been knocked in, and before high water she would be covered.

Now one of the two men appeared at the side of the vessel, and threw overboard a light spar to which a line was attached; the flood tide brought it in close to the shore.

"Hold on to the end!" cried Marston, throwing down the coil of the cart rope which he had hitherto carried on his arm. Hardly waiting for the assurance that all was right, he plunged into the surf and ultimately got hold of the spar; thus by the line communication was established between the shore and the wreck.

Presently a woman was lifted over the side of the vessel, a life buoy beneath her arms, to which the men on board had bent on a small rope to steady her in the sea.

"Pull gently, men," said Marston. "Pull gently!"

Now on the top of the waves, now buried in the foam, the helpless creature was dragged towards the shore. Marston stood up to his shoulders, now checking, now pulling in the rope. Nearer—more near—her hair floats on the sea, her hands are washed to and fro helplessly; is she, or is she not, a corpse? Nearer—he grasps her arm. Nearer—he lifts her up; and carries her ashore amid a shout of exultation!

'Twas a strange meeting after so many years of separation.

Already there were warm blankets, where the fire burnt in a crevice of the cliff. Instantly her outer clothes were removed, and the unknown (for such she was to the majority) was wrapped in them. They tried in vain to give her coffee; but Marston forced her teeth apart, and poured a little whiskey down her throat. A covered market-cart stood waiting on the top of the cliff; into this he lifted his old friend, and holding her in his arms, bade the boy drive for life and death to the house where Lucy had lodgings.

Meanwhile, the line was pulled on board and a sailor brought ashore.

"L—— have mercy on us! 'tis Cap'n Gally," said the villagers, as that redoubtable individual was landed high but wet; quite equal though to a cup of coffee flavoured with an equal quantity of spirit.

"There's another to come," said the men.

"Yase," said Gallait.

Yet the line was allowed to float unheeded. Once only a tall form was seen to move as the vessel gave a heavy lurch heeling over seawards, but he never appeared again. No, not when the tide rose and covered the wreck.

"Poor falow!" said Gallait. "I 'spose he too stiff to move."

Weeks afterwards when some fishermen recovered

one of the chain cables, a long piece of rope was found fastened to it, in the coils of which the body of a sailor was entangled. To identify the features was impossible—evidently judging from his clothes he was a common seaman.

Gallait reported the wreck to the Custom House authorities, as that of the schooner 'La Victoire,' bound to Bayonne from Liverpool, in ballast. He had no papers, they were lost; he was himself the owner; and as the vessel was not insured, he was a ruined man.

These were the last instructions Jones had given him, and he faithfully carried them out.

That night the 'Thalassa' broke up, and her fragments were scattered for miles along the Arcadian coast.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE news of the wreck was carried for miles inland before the night closed. Among others who came down to the coast was Lord Ravenscroft; and hearing that a woman had been saved, he called at Marston's lodgings to make enquiries.

The landlady informed him that the doctor and Mr. Marston had just succeeded in bringing the poor body back to life.

His Lordship sent up his card, and after waiting some time Marston appeared.

"Is your patient likely to recover?"

"I cannot tell, my Lord. She is so completely exhausted, she may rally, and it is quite as probable that she may slip through our fingers!"

"Is she a French person?"

"No, my Lord!"

"I thought it was a French vessel."

"It may be so. However, there is no occasion for mystery in your case, because I have understood that you are a friend of the family."

"Indeed! Who is it?"

"Mrs. Maddocks!"

Lord Ravenscroft started with surprise. "Dear me. How incomprehensible!"

"There has been a signal of distress flying from St. Helen's all day, but no boat can cross."

"Is Miss Maddocks on the island then?"

"So I am informed."

"Poor girl! what torturing suspense must be hers."

"I think, my Lord, at present we had better not excite curiosity by mentioning Mrs. Maddocks's name. In a day or two she may be able to tell us all the story. If not, we can but depose to facts."

"Do you think money would tempt a boat's crew to land me on St. Helen's to-night?"

"No. Not if you were to give them the island!"

"I suppose you're right: however, I'll make the attempt as soon as it is practicable to-morrow morning."

It required a sovereign apiece to be bestowed on the boatmen before four stout fellows could be induced to undertake the passage of the Race, at day-break the morning after the wreck.

The sea still foamed as if it was in mortal struggle with some obnoxious element like sulphuric acid; but the fishermen knew every current and turn of the tide, every sunken rock and shallow; yet half the crew never expected to tread earth again, for the

sea seemed to leap up on every side, so that the boat was momentarily in danger of being swamped.

"Thank —— you are come, my Lord!" said one of the servants, who had been watching on the landing-steps. "Our young lady is nearly out of her mind!"

His Lordship hurried on to the cottage, and as soon as the door was opened, he said, in a loud key, "All's well! all's well! Where is Miss Maddocks?"

Mary was in the dining-room sitting in a semi-conscious state before the fire, not having lain down since the night she was deprived of her mother, whom she imagined to have been blown over the cliff.

"Lord Ravenscroft, Miss," said the servant.

She tried to rouse herself, and held out her hand.

"I am happy to tell you that Mrs. Maddocks is safe at Sandcombe!"

"Harriette at Sandcombe!" cried Mary, starting up; a wild uncertain light dancing in her eye. "Am I dreaming? Did you say Mamma is at Sandcombe?"

"Yes," said his Lordship, again taking and retaining Mary's hand; "and now let me beg you for her sake to lie down and get some rest."

"No: I must go to her instantly! instantly! Bring me my hat and shawl!"

"You will only alarm Mrs. Maddocks if you arrive in your present state. If you will lie down for a few hours I will await and bring you over; by that

time the water will be smooth, and I am sure the boatmen couldn't be made to recross the Race until the sea goes down."

After a great deal of persuasion, being repeatedly assured of her mother's safety, Mary consented to take her friend's advice; and now that the pressure of anxious thought was removed, sleep soon took possession of her, nor did she awake till the afternoon.

It required no little effort to enable her to realize the facts of the past two days, when she was dressing after her rest. Her mother spirited away, and Lord Ravenscroft waiting to escort her to Sandcombe. What was the relation between the two events? What was the use of speculating?—two things worth living for were certain. Her mother was in safety, and Lord Ravenscroft had risked his life to tell her so, therefore she had two reasons for being grateful.

Will it be considered very unfeeling on the part of Mary Maddocks, if her friends are told, that notwithstanding her late terrible anxiety and anguish of mind, she had so far recovered her usual composure as to be able to pay a good deal of attention to her appearance before she rejoined his Lordship; and that she almost considered it a matter of self-gratulation that her grief had not found expression in tears and red eyelids. Mary was instinctively alive to the fact that sympathy on the part of gentlemen is usually in proportion to the beauty of the distressed

object. Even the old knights, notwithstanding their chivalry, never cared to break lances for the sake of elderly ladies.

Though her cheeks were pale and her eyes bespoke languor, Mary never looked more interesting than when she re-entered the dining-room. Lord Ravenscroft acknowledged to himself that she appeared unusually lovely, and in that mood which of all others is most fatal to the liberties of the sterner sex ; that gentle, yielding mood, when every tone and inflection of the voice suggests the necessity of offering help, just as a vine trailing on the ground mutely desires the first passer-by to raise and support it.

"I can never sufficiently thank you, my Lord, for all you have done for me and mine this day. I know Mamma will be inexpressibly grateful."

"Never mind thanking me! Are you ready to start?"

"Quite ready!"

"Have you taken lunch?"

"Yes."

"Then you must do me the favour to let me see you take a glass of wine before you leave."

Mary smiled and obeyed.

On their way to the boat, Lord Ravenscroft told her all the particulars he had gleaned of Mrs. Madocks's mysterious voyage, adding, "I cannot conceal the fact from you that your Mamma is still in a

critical state, although with care there is no reason to expect but that she will soon recover."

Mary had been flattering herself with the notion that safe on shore meant safe from danger; she was not aware that exhaustion and exposure often prove fatal to persons rescued from drowning; and pictured to herself Mrs. Maddocks reclining on a sofa, a little tired perhaps, rather languid, like a lady after a ball.

"I wish I had left St. Helen's when you first arrived, my Lord."

"That there might be two invalids instead of one, instead of your being able to play the part of nurse?"

Shortly after they landed, a car from St. Olaf's was brought down to the beach. No one could be more attentive than Lord Ravenscroft; but still no word escaped his lips that might not have been uttered by any friend. Had Mary been older and more versed in female matrimonial tactics, she might now have felt it her duty at this period of the game to give his Lordship a little encouragement; to step on, if not a little over, the line of formal propriety. He was a timid man, and had been chilled by one refusal; a trout that has felt the hook rarely rises again at the same fly. Happily for her, her maidenly reserve hedged her round with such restraint, that she was preserved from making any of those signs by which the eager and unwary are entrapped into

confessions. Her manner convinced Lord Ravenscroft that he must take the initiative, if indeed he could ever make up his mind to risk a second refusal.

The roads were rough and heavy, and two hours elapsed before the car rattled into the little village of Sandcombe.

"Don't drive up to the door," said his Lordship.

Lifting Mary out of the vehicle, he escorted her to the lodgings. Marston opened the door.

"How is Mamma?"

"Better! but still very weak."

"Is she able to speak?"

"We think she has once or twice mentioned your name. She is dozing now."

In the dim light of the half-darkened room, Mary saw a slight female figure standing near the bedside. She moved aside as she approached. Mary stooped and kissed her mother's forehead, and then turning noticed that Lucy Lockwood stood at the foot of the bed. Putting out her hand, "Thank you, very much!" she said. "I know you have been taking my place here."

Lucy could only press her friend's hand in return, and then left the room. Mary wondered at first at her abrupt departure, but soon the sound of some one coughing told her why the young girl had run away.

One of Mrs. Maddocks's hands lay outside the

coverlid, Mary held it in hers, as she sat watching by the bedside; watching till the dark day faded into night, and the shaded lamp replaced the dim daylight. Then Mrs. Maddocks awoke; and, looking round, recognized her child, and smiled so tenderly, that Mary failed to check the tears which fell on her mother's cheek as she kissed her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE days that followed were days of languor and mental pain for Mrs. Maddocks. She had been told by Marston that no one had escaped from the wreck but herself and Gallait. She could not grieve that her persecutor was dead; nevertheless it was terrible to think that she had unwittingly been the cause of his destruction—that she had been the Nemesis to lure him to his fate. Peradventure there was something of love at the bottom of all his late doings; he was one who lived in defiance of every law which he could trample upon or destroy: therefore in his mad attempt at punishing her, in his strange mode of attempting to drive her into his arms as wild beasts are driven into pitfalls, he had acted in obedience to his own law, or rather lawless liberty, and the end was that he had died for her. But ere this half-regretful mood tempered the feeling of detestation which she had so lately felt towards her enemy, the remembrance of all the evil he had wrought, and of the humiliation he had designed for her, came back

with full force, and from the inmost depths of her soul arose a cry of thanksgiving that she had been preserved from a double death.

It was not easy to think calmly of her late experiences; and as long as her mind dwelt on the absolute horror of that waking in the boat—of the suspense of that first half-hour after she was brought on board the schooner, when that brave seaman, now past rewarding, stood up in her defence, backed by the sympathy of his fellows—then the thick darkness of that awful night, amid the storm-chorus of the sea, and the subsequent shipwreck, when Jones lifted her over the side, and asked for forgiveness, a boon not withheld—yes, as long as her mind dwelt on these things, no wonder that her sleep was feverish and her dreams harrowing.

Marston contrived to visit Mrs. Maddocks every day. His calm and peaceful presence was very grateful to her wearied spirit, and now that her soul was subdued within her, he did not neglect to avail himself of his almost priestly character to minister to the sick woman the consolations of religion. She could not but listen believingly to one whose faith was written in his life. Yet he could not help feeling that his earnest, loving spirit was wrestling with one of nearly equal strength, not easily to be subjected to the bonds of the Christian creed. Do we not all know that spiritual affinities are undeniable realities? Have we not all of us at times felt that

we were in the presence of people, even those of our own sphere, between whom and ourselves there was an impenetrable barrier of passive indifference, which absorbed or deflected every ray of sympathy, as a sheet of glass refuses to transmit an electric stream? In some degree this was true of the spirit that animated Mrs. Maddocks; Marston could not overcome it, but he believed it was simply a case of "*possession*," therefore he turned not back from his good work.

The invalid suffered no persons to attend her but Mary and Lucy Lockwood; except occasionally when Marston was present, one or other was always in the room. Had Mrs. Maddocks been perfectly well, she would have observed that Lucy Lockwood was herself an invalid, and that her cough was not the cold the young girl professed it to be. Mary though was not deceived, and insisted on taking the greatest share of the work; nevertheless it was a great comfort to her to know that she could indulge a long walk daily while her mother was watched as tenderly as if she were present.

Lucy was never more content than when she was Mrs. Maddocks's sole companion, seated by her bedside, sometimes reading, more usually talking, and not unfrequently enlarging on the goodness of Marston. When she changed the conversation, Mrs. Maddocks used often to say,

— "No, dear—excuse me; do talk about yourself.

I prefer to hear your life-story to anything you can read to me or tell me."

Then Lucy would narrate her earliest recollections, dwelling on those years of self-denial (not understood at that time) when Marston was saving money to start his scheme.

"There were many, many difficulties to encounter, and those within were greater than those without; vyings, jealousies, disappointments; but what grieved him most was the suspicion with which he was at times regarded by those for whom he was giving up his life. Often have I seen tears in his eyes, but rarely have I heard a harsh word from his lips. His work required so much gentleness, as well as immense strength, boldness and great judgment. But he has triumphed; our people have such faith in him now, that their lives are at his service. More than once though he has said to me, 'I wish that our Association depended less upon myself. I don't desire to accomplish a work that no one else can; but on the contrary I wish to set an example that any man or set of men might follow.'"

Lucy would talk freely on this or any other theme; she only grew reticent when Mrs. Maddocks asked her questions respecting herself.

When the full light was admitted into the room, and the invalid occupied an armchair by the fire, she perceived that her young friend was in a critical

state, and that the symptoms of pulmonary disease were too evident to be mistaken.

"I had no idea, my dear girl, that you were so unwell; it is more fitting that I should nurse you than you me. I must consult the doctor about you."

Lucy smiled. "I am already under treatment. Every day I take cod-liver oil, and it is doing me all the good in the world. I quite hope to get back to my duties in a fortnight at least."

"I shall put a veto on that," said Mrs. Maddocks.

"If," thought Lucy, "you were going to remain here, I should be content to stay." For the first time in her life she was now *enjoying* the society of one of her own sex; between herself and her companions at the Grange there was great cordiality, but no fullness of affection; her refinement was always superior to theirs; their natures were being moulded after a better model, her spirit was already in perfect unison with the highest development of polished life, which means the practice of Christianity unadulterated by the formalities and vulgarities of many-sided sectarianism.

"Surely," thought Mrs. Maddocks, "I can find more congenial work for this young girl when her health is restored than superintending the arrangements at the Grange. I must speak to Marston about her. She is too delicate for such responsibilities."

Not long afterwards Marston called, and was ushered up stairs.

"Now, my good friend," pointing to a chair beside her, "sit down here, and let me have some conversation with you. I must begin by telling you how I came on board that vessel; and firstly, let me heartily thank you, as indeed I must thank all around me, for restraining their curiosity in reference to this subject. I presume the story of my adventure is already a matter of common gossip; it could not well be otherwise. Whether it will be necessary to give all the particulars to the world, you shall judge." Mrs. Maddocks then proceeded to narrate those details with which we are acquainted. When Marston, however, heard that Jones was the person who had carried her off, he could not avoid exclaiming, "It is almost incredible! you have been preserved from a double death!"

"What do you advise?"

"The common report is that you were surrounded by the tide on an outlying piece of rock, and being seen by the crew of the vessel you were picked up and brought on board, as in consequence of the wind getting up the men could not be spared to land you at the steps."

"For once, then, rumour is beneath the mark, on the principle, I presume, that truth is stranger than fiction. I think I had better confine the knowledge of the facts to my daughter and yourself."

Marston replied, "I hate concealment, but perhaps in this instance you have resolved on the wisest course. After all it is entirely a personal matter, and you must use your own discretion."

"You always fight for the highest ground. However, we won't contend now. I am too weak to fight; besides I want you to tell me the history of Lucy Lockwood."

Marston turned pale. "I am hardly prepared to answer your question:—I mean, to gratify your very natural curiosity.—I took a fancy to her when a child, and it was the best day's work I ever did when I brought her home."

"I know all that; but whose child is she?"

Marston became more embarrassed than ever. The time had evidently come to break the long silence of years; but how to avoid shocking his companion was the difficulty that appalled him.

"Can't you trust me with a secret?"

"If it did not concern yourself."

"I don't understand you."

"If I must tell you, I fear the narrative will suggest some painful thoughts."

"I am equal to anything after what I have lately gone through."

"Do you know what became of your first-born?"

"Yes; it died in infancy."

"Have you any reason to suppose a deception was practised on you?"

"Certainly not."

"My poor friend," said Marston, taking Mrs. Maddocks's hand, "no closer tie can exist between two human beings than between you and Lucy."

"What! Lucy my child? O Marston! Marston! Hold me! hold me!"

He flung his arm round her. Every nerve and fibre of her body were quivering, but she neither spoke nor wept.

Was it pain or joy that wrung her heart? Did the mother rejoice, or the fine lady tremble?

After a long silence she murmured, "I perceive she is dying—my child!—my child!"

Then she wept plenteously.

"Does she know who I am?"

"No."

"Then I must tell her when I am equal to it. Marston, God will bless you! I—can never, never thank you!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Sit down here, Lucy, dear!" said Mrs. Maddocks, making her take the seat lately occupied by Marston. "Your friend and I have been conspiring against you."

"Against me?"

"Yes, against your liberty. I want you to see Dr. Watson; so as soon as I am better I shall set out for London, and you will come with me."

"Oh Mrs. Maddocks, you are too kind! I cannot leave the Grange so long—and besides you know I have never been accustomed to travel, and"—

"Yes, dear, I know all about it! There is a portmanteau to be got ready, and a wardrobe, and all that sort of thing. Of the former I have a dozen at your service, and when we get to Town you will find it quite possible to buy everything you need."

Mrs. Maddocks's hand was on Lucy's shoulder; her words were spoken in the softest and tenderest tone; how could she resist such generous intentions?

Yet there was one thing wanted—Marston's express consent.

"I hope, Mrs. Maddocks, you won't think me ungrateful; but as I owe everything to Mr. Marston, my mind will not be easy unless I consult him on this matter."

"By all means, dear! You are quite right; but I tell you beforehand, he will not refuse me."

At this moment Mary came into the room, her eyes very bright, her cheeks flushed. She kissed her mother, and Mrs. Maddocks perceived that something unusual had occurred.

Lucy, seeing that each had something to say to the other, left the room.

"What has happened, Mary?"

"He has asked me to be his wife, and—and—I told him I would give him an answer to-morrow after I had consulted you."

"You mean Lord Ravenscroft?"

"Certainly."

"Ask your own heart, Mary; question your own self jealously. Do you love him before all others? Is he as dear to you as your own life? Search yourself. See that there is no weed of ambition in your affection, and answer him according to the truth of your own love. My darling, darling child! willingly would I keep you with me while life lasts, but such a wish springs out of selfishness, and I desire nothing but your happiness."

"Then I think, Harriette, my dearest sister, mother, I—I—cannot say No a second time."

In a few days after this Mrs. Maddocks was sufficiently recovered to be enabled to start for London accompanied by Mary and Lucy.

The former congratulated herself that her mother had found a companion who would in some measure replace her when she married, little dreaming of the tie that united them. Dr. Watson was consulted, and being pressed by Mrs. Maddocks (privately) for a candid answer, at once confessed that nothing but a warm climate could save the invalid, and recommended Madeira.

"I fear," said the Doctor, "that another winter in England might be fatal to Miss Lockwood."

Lord Ravenscroft, who had attended the ladies to London, was a little surprised at hearing from Mrs. Maddocks that she intended sailing for Madeira in a few days. Mary could not understand her mother's conduct. "What could she mean by rushing out of England at a moment's notice for the sake of improving a young girl's health whom she had only known for little more than a week?"

Mrs. Maddocks's cheeks grew warm when she replied, "Would you secure your happiness at the expense of this young girl's life?"

"No, dear! but are we bound to turn our backs on all the engagements and duties of life as soon as we meet an invalid who needs change of air? Sup-

pose all the world acted as you propose to do, a social chaos would ensue. Why not give money, dear, and pay a companion to attend our young friend?"

"Lucy Lockwood did not hire any one to attend on me when I was brought almost dying to her door!"

"Even love is tainted with selfishness," thought Mrs. Maddocks.

Mary did not urge her opinions further. In the course of the evening Lord Ravenscroft asked when Mrs. Maddocks proposed to embark.

"Next week."

"Then I must press for a great favour. Do not take Mary from me. Let us be married without delay!"

"Can you not follow us to the island?"

"Certainly I could; but if Mary will consent to our union before you leave, will you give your permission?"

"Then you would take my child from me at a fortnight's notice?"

"Say rather that you will gain another."

"Well, plead your own cause. I will not oppose you."

There was no longer any drop of regret in Mrs. Maddocks's heart that she had not succeeded in attaining the object of her ambition. Her soul was now filled with a strange, an almost terrible love for

her first-born, whom she had recovered but to lose. And when it was finally arranged that Mary's marriage should take place as soon as possible, she longed to be away, longed to be alone with her Lucy. In that foreign land she might have years of life—in England her days were numbered, and she would be taken from her before they could know each other.

When Lucy heard that Mrs. Maddocks had resolved to spend the winter in Madeira, and that she was to accompany her, the tidings sounded like the repetition of a dream. Who was this warm-hearted lady so deeply interested in her welfare, to whose care Marston so easily resigned her? Who was this beautiful creature whose eyes were so often turned lovingly on her, whose touch thrilled through her, whose voice was as music to her soul? Perhaps Marston would tell her: he must know. She would write to him. "She exercises a strange influence over me. I obey her, who have always had others to do my bidding; but her will seems irresistible."

Marston answered her letter by return of post; said he was truly glad to hear of the pleasant voyage before her, that the expedition would surely benefit her health, and therefore he was contented to give her up. He added that she need feel no hesitation in accepting Mrs. Maddocks's bounty, since she was a lady possessing large property, and he was quite sure that in accompanying her abroad she was conferring as much as receiving a favour.

He might have added that the Grange was a weary abode now that she was gone, that his work had lost its gilding when he no longer had her society, and that as he wrote tears were rolling down his cheeks; but he refrained from adding a word that might in his judgment give rise to a painful thought. In the innocence of his heart he did not suspect that Lucy, in reading his letter, felt the absence of that tenderer strain which he had suppressed out of consideration to her feelings. She sighed as she re-read the letter, and placed it in her bosom. "Would," she thought, "it were a little more human!"

Like many another weary one, Lucy Lockwood must be content not to realise the highest happiness she was capable of enjoying. Unknowingly she had found the object she had long desired; while she knew she could never win that half-confessed yet secretly treasured wish.

The letter contained a postscript informing her that the writer would see her before she sailed. Meantime her cough became aggravated.

The intervening days were occupied in preparations for the marriage. Not the least important was the execution of a deed settling a thousand a year on Mary. Then came the day of white favours for servants and postilions. In spite of the late coolness between the two houses, the bride was given away by her uncle, the Doctor. Mary appeared at

the altar in a travelling-dress, and left with her husband immediately afterwards for Granton Park, in Hampshire, which had been placed at their service by his Lordship's cousins, the Earl and Countess of Aldertree.

"And so you're going to Madeira, ma'am," said the Doctor.

"We intend to embark the day after to-morrow."

"Well, ma'am, all I have to say is that you have left it too late; invalids should never go to Madeira after September or before June."

"Indeed!"

"You may rely on what I say; but I suppose, in common with most of your sex, if I wanted to keep you in England I ought to advise you to go. That's Oriana's dodge, you know. If I want her to take wine I say, 'My dear, your system has a tendency to inflammatory action, you must avoid wine and fermented liquors;' then she goes in for sherry and porter no end, with a small nightcap of gin-and-water; feels all the better for it, and of course says I don't understand her constitution. She's a good sort of woman though for all that, and we get on admirably together as long as I'm out of the way. Can I do anything for you in Arcady?"

"No, thank you."

"By the way, that was a good morning's work of yours when you gave Arthur Apaly the Abbey living. He goes in at the Dissenters like a brick, and bowls

over the Baptists like ninepins. I shouldn't wonder if he's made a bishop some day, particularly if he qualifies by getting one wife."

"Won't you spend the evening with us, Doctor? I should be very glad if you will stay."

"No doubt. I meant to say thank you; but I've promised Agnes to walk with her to school to-morrow morning, and I can't disappoint her. Good-bye." The Doctor left the room, and then coming hurriedly back, he put his head in at the door: "I beg your pardon, but as you're going abroad by yourself, and goodness knows what you may be thinking about before you come back, but for — sake, my dear madam, don't bring back a Portuguese husband; do you know they are the most abandoned unprincipled vagabonds on the earth. One of them while I was in Lisbon stole a pair of gloves of mine, and they were the only pair I ever remember to have owned. Good-bye."

Marston was expected to arrive on the morrow, Lucy was anxious and excited; the transition from the Grange to her present life was an immense change, and, while she was still holding her breath, she was about to embark on a long sea voyage. About nine o'clock a violent fit of coughing came on, and some time after it terminated Lucy felt her mouth full of some warm liquid. She had broken a blood-vessel. When the medical man arrived he

was able to make a more reassuring report than either Mrs. Maddocks or the invalid expected.

"No doubt," he said, "great care is necessary; but he had known similar cases where the patient had rallied." The most notable result however of his visit was that the Madeira journey was abandoned. It was too late; the voyage would be too trying for Lucy. Consequently when Marston arrived he was sent down to the Isle of Wight to engage a suitable house either at Undercliff or Ventnor. At the former place he found the residence he sought, — beautifully situated, a glazed verandah encircled the sitting-rooms, forming a greenhouse, which was well stocked with plants; and, as soon as the patient could be easily moved, she and Mrs. Maddocks took possession of it.

"This is much pleasanter," said Lucy, "than dying at sea or in a strange land."

CHAPTER XXXIIL

CHRISTMAS came, the new year followed, and saw Mrs. Maddocks and Lucy still alone in the cottage. The latter marvellously well. On fine days, with the protection of a respirator, she took short walks, and would have extended her rambles had she been permitted. Her chief occupations were writing a diary, forwarded twice a week to the Grange, reading, and being read to. Then there were pleasant intervals of woman's talk; but yet between the two no mutual confidence had been exchanged.

Lucy wondered at the undoubted evidences of Mrs. Maddocks's love. Why should she care for her? That she (herself) should love her benefactress was only natural, since she had so gratuitously taken her under her protection.

It is not to be wondered at that Mrs. Maddocks should shrink from opening up that old wound, especially as Lucy made no reference to the past. Was it not enough to be near her, to watch over and nurse her? No; the mother was separated from the child by the possession of an unshared secret.

"I am gaining strength so rapidly, Mrs. Maddocks, that I quite expect to be able to return to the Grange in the spring."

"Are you already tired of me, Lucy?"

"Tired of you! you who have devoted yourself to the restoration of my health! No, no; I could never tire of you!"

"Then why do you wish to leave me?"

"While I am here I lead a life of ease and indolence that enervates me. At the Grange I can work and help my brother."

"Your brother?"

"Yes; Mr. Marston always taught me to call him brother. It was the goodness of his heart that suggested the idea, because he knew how lonely I felt in spirit. This is a very cold world, unless you have friends and relatives. God has given me him and you, and many others in less degree at the Grange, as friends; but there is no one to call me sister, cousin, niece, or child. Isn't it sad?"

"Have you made no inquiries? You must have had relations once."

"Not long before I met you I thought the veil would be raised."

"In what way?"

"I don't know that I am doing right in telling you."

"I am sure you can't be doing wrong. Let me hear the story."

"In the early part of October I received two anonymous letters, in which the writer assumed that Mr. Marston knew a good deal of my history. My correspondent said I was entitled to considerable property, and that if Mr. Marston applied to my mother she could not deny that she married my father at Tedbury Church under the name of Anne Sawyer."

"What did Marston do?"

"He very reluctantly did anything; because he believed the letters were written for a malicious purpose. However, he went to Tedbury one day, and found that the parish register had been tampered with—several leaves were missing."

"Why didn't you make other enquiries?"

"Because Marston said that it was my duty to be silent, and that I could best prove my filial affection by refusing to proceed farther in the matter. I confess it was hard advice to follow."

"Did you care for the property so much then?"

"The property? No! I cared for the delight of knowing a mother's love. But when I found that the knowledge of my existence would hardly ensure me her affection, I submitted to remain quiet rather than risk the mortification of being disowned. Do you think I acted wisely?"

"I think that Mr. Marston displayed a forbearance and an amount of generous consideration for a sorely distressed woman that must entitle him to her

everlasting gratitude, and you in following his advice rendered yourself worthy of all that mother's love. Come to me, Lucy—come to me!"

When Mrs. Maddocks told her life-story to her child, mother and daughter felt themselves to be united by a bond even closer than the tie of blood. To the world they were still mere friends—close friends, the younger having won the elder's regard by nursing her at Sandcombe. To each other they were everything. To the world Mrs. Maddocks was still an enigma; a cloud had rested on her in the dawn of life; that shadow could never, if for no other reason than for Mary's sake, be cleared away; to her daughter she was a pure and spotless woman. Had Lucy been endowed with health, had she lived to enter the marriage state, her mother would have had to unfold every page in her life at whatever cost to herself. This last pain was spared her; spared her not at her own, but at her loving daughter's earnest request, who had learnt the difficult lesson of preferring others to herself.

From this day they were rarely out of each other's sight. All that the young girl had imagined of the tender nature of maternal affection was now her own in its fullest extent. It had long been waited for, and this patient waiting now bore perfect fruit.

The Ravenscrofts paid Mrs. Maddocks a flying

visit in March. They urged her to come to them at Deepdene.

No; she was not going to return to Arcady yet. As soon as the March winds were over she was going to travel on the continent, and would not return for months.

"Oh do, Harriette, come and see us before you go."

"I think not, darling. Now that I have seen you, my eyes care to look on nothing else in Arcady. I long to revisit the scenes of our continental pilgrimage when you were a troublesome child."

When April came Lucy and her mother embarked at Southampton for Havre, unattended by any one. The former had never been at sea, and, as is commonly the case with consumptive people, she enjoyed perfect immunity from the *mal de mer*.

They passed from town to town, now lingering a week in places that pleased them, then hurrying on as if they were pressed for time. In this manner they traversed the South of France, till Lucy's strength becoming less equal to the fatigue of travelling, they at last found their way to the shores of Lake Como, where they took up their abode.

Sometimes Mrs. Maddocks, when reviewing the past, felt disposed to question the propriety of Marston's conduct in keeping her from the knowledge of Lucy's existence, because now that she had found her she loved her so tenderly. A little re-

flection would have sufficed to show that those very qualities which rendered her daughter so loveable were due to the training she had received. What but the careful watching of that true friend would have sufficed to discipline the young girl's mind so that she could calmly look on and talk of approaching death as if she were about to lie down to sleep. None of the accomplishments that Mary or herself possessed would have insured that serenity of mind which enabled the invalid to bear pain uncomplainingly, and to look to the end with such calmness and fortitude.

To look to the end when the world began to grow beautiful in her eyes, when a home and love were hers. Had she laid down her life a year before, she would have died at her post, as a warrior falls in battle. But now, when a sense of obligation no longer could compel her to toil early and late, when all the comforts and enjoyments afforded by wealth were in her reach, when she could lay her weary head and sleep on a mother's shoulder, she was called upon to die.

Mrs. Maddocks wondered. It could not be indifference, for Lucy's temperament was exquisitely sensitive. A word made her cheek flush and her eye brighten. Sometimes the beauty of the golden sunsets called forth tears, perhaps because the earthly glory suggested an eternal radiance. "What is it, Lucy, that makes you so peaceful?"

"The love of God, dear. Don't you feel it very often?"

"Not very often. But oftener since I recovered you."

This was the truth. Unconsciously Mrs. Maddocks's heart had been growing softer of late. Her cup was less bitter, her life more full. Misfortune hardened her, as fire and water harden steel. When humiliation and disappointment encompassed her round about her spirit grew defiant. Why was she to be the victim of another's guilt? it was unjust to punish her. She did not in those days of darkness consider that it is the curse of sin that, in this life at least, the innocent often suffer as well as the guilty. Children feel the consequences of parental folly, wives are punished for their husbands' sake, and husbands for their wives; brother for brother, and friend for friend. Those were not sinners above all men in Jerúsalem on whom the tower of Siloam fell. The plague does not spare the righteous, and whoever comes or is born within an area poisoned by a moral taint will certainly not escape the pernicious influence. Where responsibility rests is not a question easily determined. Mrs. Maddocks could not charge herself with guilt, and yet she suffered to some extent even now, though at last she was able to say, "It is better to be a polished blade dimmed by a spot of rust than a peasant's mattock which rust cannot injure. Better to occupy her present sphere

keenly alive to every breath of criticism, than to remain as her fathers were, beneath the observation of the world."

The English ladies—one radiant in the loveliness of matured beauty, the other in whom the mortal had sublimated almost into spiritual beauty—became celebrities in the neighbourhood of the lake. The hours when they went on the water were noted, and many a boat was simultaneously set in motion to enable strangers or natives to see our Arcadian friends.

It was some time before they were aware of the interest they created; but when many a present of fruit and flowers were offered by strangers, and when many eyes were directed towards their boat as it slowly glided along the shore, or ventured farther off the land, they could not fail to perceive that they were the objects of a respectful homage. Yet they made no acquaintances; Lucy often said her days were growing shorter, and even if they were extended, they would not suffice to exhaust the pleasure of living in the sunshine of her mother's love. It would be cruel to deprive either of them of any portion of the time during which they could enjoy each other's society.

Volumes would not contain all they had to say, as they poured forth their mutual confidences. There was no one living to whom Mrs. Maddocks could speak so unreservedly as to Lucy; to her she had to

justify herself; to her she had to tell the old story of that first great act of self-devotion, which resulted in so much evil; and the loving voice of that tender girl, breathing in reply the deepest sympathy, was as sweet to her soul as the songs of his native land to a dying bard.

"Am I justified in your sight, Lucy?"

"Do not use that word, dearest; I never arraigned you at the bar of my judgment."

"I cannot tell you what exquisite pleasure it is to me to be able to pour forth my sorrows to you. It is hard; it is very hard, to lie unjustly under censure. True, the consciousness of right sustains one; and there is always the hope that sooner or later truth will out, and your vindication be complete. This can never be the case with me except in your eyes; but this suffices, and my mind is now at rest."

"Would it not be well to make Mr. Marston your friend, when I am gone?"

"I think not, now! For the future I shall endeavour to put aside the past like a worn-out robe!"

"So also must I, dear; already we have occupied ourselves too much with it, instead of consulting the future opening immediately before me."

From that day forth little reference was made to old griefs. Lucy's strength grew weaker, the expeditions on the lake had to be relinquished; at last she could only move as she was lifted from the bed to

the couch, and *vice versâ*. The sitting-room was used as a bed-room, the windows commanded a lovely view; and beside them, or sometimes out on the balcony, the invalid's couch was placed.

As her days grew shorter, her mind became less composed, and at last her mother asked her if there was anything she desired.

After some hesitation, she said "You have done too much for me!"

"My darling, that is not the question; tell me as you love me, what more can I do?"

"I should feel easier if I could speak once more to my old friend."

Before night closed a telegram reached Marston, requesting his instant presence at Como—"Expenses to be paid." He submitted the message to the Associates; their unanimous answer was—"Go!"

As fast as rail and steam could carry him Marston travelled, stopping neither by night nor day. Nor was his haste in vain. The dying girl could bid him welcome. Welcome! with all the fervour of her soul, since he it was who had taught her to hold the truth as it is in the Lord; and she longed to listen once again to the repetition from his lips of those precious promises, which she was about to inherit.

Ten days after his arrival, he had to support the mother beside the open grave of her child!

"You will return with me to Arcady, I presume?" said Marston, the morning after the funeral.

"No, my friend. Mary is happy, and in my present state I should render her miserable. No one save yourself can enter into, or even know of, my grief. It must be borne in silence and in solitude. I shall remain abroad until the sting of this sorrow becomes bearable. With Lucy's death my old life has died; pray for me sometimes, that the days I have yet to live may be free from paltry aims and icy selfishness!"

"You must not let sorrow take possession of you!"

"You have lived by the sea coast, and have seen many vessels come into harbour battered, torn, and shaken, having escaped destruction as by a miracle. I am such a one; and sorely do I need rest to gather strength before I again set forth upon my voyage. I am not like other women. I can live without society. I can exist without gossip, and be happy without excitement. I pine for rest, Marston: perfect rest!"

"You will not get that in indolence."

"Do not mistake me. I have no intention to remain always idle; but the swimmer, when he has crossed a broad rough stream, lies down on the bank before he renews his efforts. The athlete pauses after victory: such is the rest I seek. Meantime, you can do me a favour!"

"Name it!"

"If I furnish you with my address from time to time, will you write me a monthly letter?"

"Certainly, with pleasure."

A few hours after Marston left for home.

"She is a strange creature!" thought he. "Few women have so much ability; few so much courage. If she were a man she would lead an army or a party in the state. I wonder what destiny has yet in store for her. May God have her ever in his holy keeping!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was a shame, said a great many of the Arcadians, to give the best living in the district to a young man. Such choice bits of preferment should be kept for those who have toiled long in the vineyard ; men who have borne the heat and burden of the day. The Dissenters said that it was all of a piece with the State Church, and that it only needed a few more similarly disgraceful jobs to arouse the people to rid the country of that institution. Church patronage was a relic of barbaric days, unworthy of the nineteenth century, and where could a more flagrant instance of the rottenness of the system be found than in the case of St. Olaff's Abbey, whose vicar was the nominee of a woman ? Was it not a fearful thought that by any chain of circumstances it could become possible that a woman should of her own will and pleasure appoint an inexperienced youth to the cure of souls in a vast parish like St. Olaff's ?

" Ah ! " said one of the Deacons of Bethlehem, who heard the remark, " Cure, indeed ! Shameful ! What souls can he cure ? "

Dr. Maddocks on more than one occasion was heard to express himself in favour of the appointment. "Reserve such livings for old men!—bosh! —We don't want superannuated old wind-bags to fill the pulpit, and empty the biggest church in the district. Men don't keep foundered horses for the hardest day's hunting; why should we have broken-kneed parsons to work the largest parishes? It's all — nonsense! If Arthur Apsly is not up to pulling every one of you where the hair is short my name is not Richard Maddocks."

About a week after the appointment, Agnes Maddocks was startled at seeing a strange clergyman standing in the midst of her schoolroom which he had entered unperceived.

She looked at him for a moment doubtingly. He smiled. How could she be so stupid? It was Arthur Apsly.

"Had you forgotten me?"

"No!—but not having seen you since your accident" —

"Am I so much changed, then? or, I should rather say, disfigured?"

"On the contrary, it is paradoxical as it sounds, because you are so little changed I did not recognize you at the first glance. The report in Arcady was, that you were so altered that it would be impossible for any one to know you, so I conjured up in my mind a fearfully mutilated face which called you owner."

Arthur laughed. "A sort of Frankenstein, I presume?"

"Almost. And now"——

"Now, what?"

"I am so absent. I really forgot I was speaking to you."

Agnes was about to say, that although the marks of his accident were still evident in one or two scars, and a nose no longer delicately formed—yet the general effect was no disfigurement, and what he had lost in positive beauty, was compensated for by a greater expression of strength and manliness.

"I have been calling at your house, and found everybody from home but Mrs. Murray, who told me where you were employed."

"I am sure papa would have been very glad to have seen you."

"If he doesn't call on me soon, I shall make a point of inquiring after his health," said Arthur, smiling.

"How long do you remain here?"

"Only half an hour longer."

"Then if you will permit, I will call at the expiration of that time, and I can escort you at least part of your way home."

Agnes performed her duties most inefficiently during the ensuing thirty minutes. It is to be feared that her thoughts were a good deal occupied about a certain clerical gentleman.

"I think I like his face better. Mary said he used to be too handsome; now he has plenty of good looks, and character to boot; and what is better still he has recovered his old manners."

"How improved she is," said Arthur. "She is years older than when I saw her last. I never knew any girl leap into womanhood as she has done. Once she was so yielding, so plastic, she might have been made into any shape, now she has attained a decided form. Once she might have been a pretty toy, now she will crown that man's life whom she consents to marry."

How those two young people chatted as they walked towards Arlerigge!

"Have you indeed resolved to repair the old abbey?"

"Unquestionably. If our forefathers, in the days of Britain's poverty, could afford to rear such monuments, it is our duty at least to preserve them from decay. There may be temples without a religion, but there can be no religion in a country devoid of temples, and many of ours have long since been a disgrace to us."

"What means do you intend to employ in raising funds?"

"My pen and my tongue."

"And a bazaar perhaps?"

"Never! Bazaars are odious impositions, bare-faced cheats, mendicancy in the garb of hypocrisy."

If people will not give for the love of our common faith, I will never pander to their meanness and vanity—to the love of display in the ladies who flaunt behind sham counters, wheedling men and women out of money as the price of their soft words and pleasant looks. When clergymen are possessed of the spirit of Barnum, and descend to trade on humbug and to make money out of the weaknesses of their fellows, it is a sure indication that they have more faith in the devil than in Him whom they pretend to serve.”

On the following Sunday Arthur was to preach for the first time. The usual congregation at St. Olaff's seldom reached fifty; but from a variety of causes more than four times that number assembled to hear the new preacher. Not a few came for no other reason than a desire to see if his face was fearfully smashed, as some people asserted.

Many a long day had elapsed since such a sermon had been heard within those old walls. It was anything but a milk-and-water discourse; old sinners could not sleep, because of the cold, they said; but it was not the cold that brought them there a second and a third time.

He told his congregation that they were designed to be glorious temples of the Holy Spirit, and while he pointed out what they had degenerated into, he at the same time described most affectingly the miserable condition of the edifice in which they were

assembled, contrasted with its beautiful condition when it left the builder's hands, and showed the necessity for the twofold restoration of the people and the edifice.

The Doctor pronounced it to be the best sermon he had heard for many a long day. An assertion which everybody credited who knew that he had never been inside a church for twenty years, except at marriages and funerals.

"Mine is missionary work," Arthur was heard to say. "I am the ambassador of the Catholic and Apostolic Church to the deluded multitude whom the negligence of former shapherds permitted to stray into other folds. Dissent is the product of evil days, the phenomena of disease, or at best of liberty run mad; it shall be my task to assert the supremacy of the Church of England; to prove that it is not only the church of the gentry but of the poor; that there is more light, truth, and freedom within its pale than in any other."

These sentiments were privately uttered. He knew no good would be attained by shaking a red rag in the face of every bull. His policy was conciliation; he would win the love of his parishioners. Acting in accordance with this theory, he visited every cottage, hut, and house in his parish: he made himself acquainted with the history of every family; he gave advice where counsel was needed, alms where poverty brooded, and reproof where the voice of warning was required.

In the village of Shale End he got the young men together in a large hired room, and with the assistance of his curate he delivered lectures, taught chess and draughts, and trained them to take part in public readings. Work became his motto: in the study, in the church, in the cottage, the hall, and the schoolroom, wherever a soul was to be saved within the limits of his parochial authority, there Arthur Apsly was found true to his order and profession.

As he toiled in his glorious calling he still felt one want, the bright presence of a loving wife. So earnest a man necessarily found obstacles in his path; the more strenuous his exertions, the more sweeping his efforts, the more numerous did these difficulties become. At night when the house was still, and perhaps an aching head or weary body rendered reading irksome, there was no one with whom to exchange a thought, no one to offer sympathy, or cheer him with an approving smile. Would Agnes Maddocks accept him now? He had seen her several times since his return to Arcady, but she was entirely changed since he left the country. She was frank, cheerful, and outspoken; but she was too much at ease in his society; she displayed no conscious acknowledgment of his presence; her eyes did not dilate nor her cheek redden when he drew near. Had she conquered her old love? There was another thought which in spite of himself rose to the surface: was it possible that his powers of pleasing

were diminished in consequence of his accident? A naturally plain man would never have entertained such a notion; but Arthur had not forgotten his old reputation.

"If such should be the case," said he, "it would be a gain to lose her."

After debating the question in this way, he resolved to try his luck, and waylaid Agnes on her road home from the school the next day.

"Do you attend every day at the school?"

"No! I did at first; but then I considered that if at any time I might be called from home, or should wish to pay a visit to a friend, my scholars would suffer, or my liberty would be curtailed; I therefore thought it better to engage a schoolmistress and an assistant, reserving to myself the general superintendence of the children and the entire management of the singing class. I usually go over thrice a-week, and on Saturday I hear the 'repetitions,' as we term it; in other words, I hold a weekly examination."

A long conversation followed, embracing various questions relative to the school and to the church. Arthur found his old friend possessed an amount of judgment and penetration that surprised him; and, remembering the nature of his own errand, he almost felt provoked that she should maintain such perfect composure, and appear to be so intensely interested in educational subjects. At last his patience became exhausted, and, looking her full in the face, he said,

"I am playing the hypocrite in discussing themes that are not engrossing my attention at this moment, while all my mind is occupied by one master thought."

Agnes stared.

"It is too near to my heart to enable me to clothe it in fine words. Agnes, I love you!"

His avowal, though half expected, still in some measure took her by surprise; and it was not without truth that she replied,

"I—Mr. Arthur—did not look for this."

Ere she had spoken these words a flood of painful recollections rushed through her mind. Was she merely a *pis aller* in Arthur's eyes? As long as her cousin Mary was free he had done his best to win her. Now that she was married, and not till she was married, had he ventured to declare himself. He had even mortified her in the presence of her female relatives by discarding her for another, and now was she to accept him after he had lost the stake he played for? What was the state of her own heart? was life centered in him now? was existence bearable without him? had she not risen in the strength of her filial love, and, striving for another's peace, had conquered for herself? Most true. Victory was hers! She had learnt to think of the old days as a mother thinks of the features and voice of a dead child—not to be forgotten, yet never to be seen or heard again.

Stay, Agnes Maddocks, search deeper. Is there no drop of spiteful feeling lingering at the bottom of your heart? no spirit of revenge struggling for the mastery of your soul?

Before she framed a definite reply she was face to face with the Doctor. Then she resumed her pleasant smile, her easy manner, and bade her suitor good afternoon as though no other topic than the weather had been discussed.

Arthur Apsly went home humiliated. He had the candour, however, to acknowledge that he was reaping the harvest of his own deeds.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THERE was great rejoicing in the old mansion of the Ravenscrofts. Bonfires had blazed, bells had rung, and ale had been drunk in honour of the birth of an heir.

All the family were in great glee ; but the young mother's joy was incomplete, because her mother was not there to bless the child. As soon as her strength permitted she wrote a brief note in pencil begging Mrs. Maddocks to hasten to her.

Two days after her reply reached Deepdene the wheels of a carriage were heard rolling up the avenue. It was bright spring time—fitting season for a young immortal to commence his career.

Her son-in-law greeted the traveller warmly at the door. Lady Ravenscroft the elder stood in the hall to add her welcome. Their kindness made her heart beat faster ; both mother and son kissed her. Mrs. Maddocks did not look for so much cordiality, it made her dark eyes swim.

“ Is Mary well, and her child ? ”

"Wonderfully well. She is waiting to see you."

When she stood by her daughter's bedside, and felt her arms round her neck, she could not restrain the tears that fell freely on the coverlid.

"Are you very happy, darling?"

"Yes, dear, now that you are here to see my joy."

"God bless you!" were the only words she could utter, as she held her daughter's hand in hers.

"Come and see your grandson," said his Lordship, proudly leading the way into the adjoining room, and exhibiting the infant sleeping in its cradle, with as much self-importance as a painter introduces a friend to some masterpiece of art, the last production of his genius.

When Mrs. Maddocks retired to her room, Mary confessed to herself, and grandmamma Ravenscroft remarked to her son, that Mrs. Maddocks was very much changed. "I don't mean in appearance, my dear, but in manner. She seems so subdued. When she was here before there was so much exuberance of life in all she did and said. Now she moves like a lady abbess, with all the calmness and repose of a starlight summer night."

"She is tired after travelling, that's all."

My Lord, you are in error. Mrs. Maddocks was changed, you acknowledged it after she had been some days at Deepdene, or rather, as you with just discrimination remarked, she was mellowed, as a

painting softens after it has been exposed for several years to the alternations of light and shadow.

Of the process whereby this change was wrought, you, my Lord, know nothing; you observe the effect and are pleased with it. You now say that she has grown more womanly, or rather that the finer qualities of her sex have attained development in her character. Without gloom she now possesses depth, she has lost something of that brilliancy which once encircled her, but she has gained in transparency. Once she attracted by her brightness, or, as the world would say, glitter; now she excites interest and unconscious sympathy by the gentleness and frankness of her manner. Once she was one to turn men's heads by her beauty, now she might ensure the devotion of the loftiest soul. You concluded your observations by querying: would she, or rather, whom could she marry?

Mrs. Maddocks had other thoughts. To be lost in the light of a true man's love was once her dream. Hers had been a sad awakening. All other affections save that of and for her children had been in her experience a delusion, and she began to think that a woman's destiny is not necessarily dependent for its fulfilment on possessing a greater or less amount of marital and filial love.

Once more the world was before her with all its devious ways. Once more her life drama was recast, and it was open to her to select any path.

Mary had her husband and child to live for, while she was virtually alone, and of late drifting aimlessly towards the unknown shore. Drifting? No; it was a season of repose during the heat of the day. Indolence was intolerable for her. There could be no rest except in work, and that work must no longer be a selfish striving after paltry ends, the miserable gratification of female ambition. It must be altogether a new life, such as she had glimpses of in Lucy's character, and which she had seen revealed in Marston's.

No wonder that her friends deemed her changed, when thoughts such as these were struggling for expression, not in speech but in becoming deeds. Thoughts that were rising like a new spiritual power within her, warring with the old nature and wrestling mightily for victory. These new fancies were no mushroom growth, or a mere reactionary influence arising from a state of morbid melancholy. On the contrary, she had fought against them, partly conquered them at seasons, but every time they were cut down they struck deeper root, gathered strength, and as she yielded still they stronger grew. So she passed from city to city, a silent, sorrowful, solitary woman; but she could not pass to any region beyond the reach of her Father's love. So the old life grew weaker, and the new power stronger day by day.

At last the summons from Deepdene arrived,

bidding her return. It was the voice she had been waiting for ; it came, and she hurried home.

No child could be more affectionate than Mary, no relatives kinder than the Ravenscrofts ; but her place was in her own house, and, after a month elapsed, she took up her abode at the Hall.

As the mother-in-law of Lord Ravenscroft many local magnates sought her acquaintance who formerly would not notice her. She appreciated at their full value these new friends. But for Mary's sake, as well as in vindication of her social victories, she received all cordially, and in due time repaid their visits ; though now, when the door of the temple of Arcadian fashion was open, she cared little to enter thereat. None of the triumphs within that charmed arena formed a portion of her programme.

In former years, in a certain spasmodic manner she had bestowed her charities, especially at Christmas, not caring to consider that feeding paupers well for one week will not afford them an immunity from hunger during the remainder of the year. Now she began to consider that, probably in virtue of her experience and position, she was especially called on to remedy those evils which she had herself known.

Whom should she consult ? Her lawyer ? He would take a money view of the whole question. Arthur Apsly ? He was too young. Lord Ravenscroft ? He was an excellent creature, but her son-

in-law. William Marston? Wasn't he an enthusiast? Truly. But was he not an honest man?

So Marston was called in. How he talked! How he declaimed! It was delightful to listen to the utterance of such a faith as his,—a faith that compelled him to believe in a future for the peasant. Yes, a future in the slang sense,—namely, an improved future.

"It is but education, Mrs. Maddocks—the education first of books, then of association. Only let them be amenable to a higher moral law than now practically obtains, and the evil is remedied. Our poor-law board would have so few paupers to provide for, the old officials would die of *ennui*, and the young ones in their despair would rush off to other employment. Our gaols would be emptied of half their prisoners, and our magistrate parsons would be compelled to find parish work merely to kill time. Our rates would fall to one-half, and the landlords would of course put the difference in their pockets."

"The farmer, according to your own showing, will gain nothing."

"Pardon me, he will gain in being better served; pray remember though that the cause I advocate is not recommended on the score of gain, but of duty,—the duty of every individual to provide as much happiness for, and to put off as much evil from his fellows as he is able to do. I believe there are some men who deem the expression 'The poor ye have

always with you,' to be a reason why the people should always shiver on the shores of pauperism."

This conversation was prolonged through the whole of a summer afternoon. As many of the speaker's arguments chimed with the preconceived notions of the listener, it will excite no surprise when it is stated that Mrs. Maddocks commenced her new career by an examination of all the cottages on the estate, and ordered such alterations as might enable the occupiers to live in them without daily outraging decency.

To be bitten by a mad dog is a disagreeable accident; but it is not such a serious calamity as being bitten by a philanthropist. In the former case the patient generally dies, and his sufferings end with him; in the latter, it is impossible to calculate what bad results may follow. All the old notions of a people may be changed; they may require more rooms in their cottages, more garden-ground, more wages, more intellectual light; they may get to have opinions on matters affecting the Church and the State, inducing many bilious headaches, serious attacks of the gout, and alarming apprehensions in the minds of rulers local and central; so that the bench, the senate, and the church may become filled with the victims of this mania, whose lives would be rendered miserable, from pain, weakness, and anxiety.

Already philanthropy has made us build palaces for idiots and handsome mansions for our criminals;

has passed a ten hours factory bill, and prevented children under a certain age from making themselves useful. Such is the pernicious influence of bad example that we may expect ere long to see the peasantry asking for washhouses, additional sleeping rooms for their daughters, and adequate wages for themselves.

Let us all pray to be preserved from the philanthropic mania!

NOTE I.

All lovers of noble and generous actions will be glad to learn that Mr. Apsly, senior, was so touched by Mrs. Maddocks's friendly conduct in appointing his son to the living of St. Olaff's Abbey that, shortly after that lady's return to Surdon Hall, he felt it to be his duty to offer her his hand and heart, or heart and hand—either or both. Mrs. Maddocks, actuated by a like spirit of magnanimity, respectfully refused to accept the sacrifice.

NOTE II.

Miss Agnes Maddocks permitted the Rev. Arthur Apsly to remain six months in a state of uncertainty, when, in a weak moment, she told him (a speech which doubtless she soon repented of), that "she never loved anybody, and never could love anybody but him." The result of this unguarded confession was that she married that gentleman. It is universally admitted that the music at the Abbey is finer than in any other church in Arcady, and the congregation is the largest of any in the country region round about Arlerigge.

NOTE III.

Mrs. Maddocks's strange fancy for improving the condition of the peasantry on her estate gave rise to much gossip in the neighbourhood. People said 'twas a pity she didn't marry. After more than a year had passed people said 'twas a great pity she was going to be married—to descend from the position she had gained by marrying William Marston. Not many years afterwards several of these critics were glad to call Marston friend, but then he had won a name for himself, and sat for Wortleborough.

Can it be doubted that he remained true to his opinions, and in his elevated sphere is able most effectually to extend the application of his philanthropic theories?

THE END.

